

MARIST notebooks

DANS CE LOCAL
LE 2 JANVIER 1817
L'ABBÉ
CHAMPAGNAT
FONDA L'INSTITUT
DES
FRÈRES MARIST



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Cover Photo: Commemorative plaques of the foundation and the Bicentenary in La Valla.

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EDITORIAL

The current issue of Marist Notebooks (#35) intended to appear during our bicentennial could have been organized as a separate edition with the purpose of providing a synthesis of our Marist experience. However, various documents such as the recent History of Our Marist Institute, as well as documents introducing our bicentennial along with other Marist publications have already adequately responded to this demand.

From the beginning, the fundamental objective of Marist Notebooks was to provide a basic setting for critical analysis. In keeping with this goal, this issue is based upon two of its fundamental and complementary components, that is, the reinterpretation and the enrichment of certain elements of our beginnings.

The body of information gathered about the Montagne experience by Brothers Michael Green and André Lanfrey suggests a rereading and reinterpretation of the incident that has become so symbolically note-

worthy in the last few decades, each author providing his own insights into the matter.

To some degree, several of the remaining articles provide us with enrichment, for they seek to draw our attention to familiar age-old documents which were never completely grasped because their basic intention had never been fully understood. The documents themselves are of relative importance. In my opinion those dealing with the commitment of the early Brothers are the ones of utmost importance. Articles dealing with such issues as the Marist sayings, Father Courveille's letterhead seal, Marcellin's younger brother, can be considered as rather interesting but they are less significant. However taken as a whole, I certainly feel that these articles contribute a great deal to a better understanding of our beginnings. Two recent articles complete the rather eclectic collection: one deals with the debts incurred by Barthélemy Champagnat, and the other deals with Father Champagnat's godfather.

While this current issue deals mostly with the beginnings of our Institute, it also goes beyond this by including a noteworthy article on Marist Education in Chili by Julio Gajardo Vasquez, a rather comprehensive

coverage of the evolution of the Province of Aubenas by Brother Alain Delorme, and a review of the computer programming of our historical sources being done of by Brother Paul Sester.

THE MONTAGNE MYTH

An archetype of Marist ministry



Br Michael Green

In this article Brother Michael Green considers how the early accounts of Saint Marcellin's encounter with a dying child have developed into the Montagne story of today, and how and why it has been somewhat mythologised in the process. If the story is to continue to help contemporary Marists to define their identity and to choose their priorities in mission, then Brother Michael suggests that it is helpful for them to have a critical understanding of the way that Marcellin and his first followers understood the significance of the story, and to see how these intuitions can create a myth of enduring relevance for Marists.

1. DRAWING ON MARIST 'DEEP STORY'

The written communiqué of the 2014 Marist International Mission Assembly¹ carried an imperative that has become a quite familiar expression over recent decades: the delegates called on their fellow Marists around the world to seek out the “Montagnes of today”. No fewer than four times is this phrase employed in text. In the introductory remarks we read the delegates’ description of their experience in Nairobi as a “new Pentecost”:

“... the Spirit set our hearts on fire,
and prompted us to dream of new horizons
of greater vitality for the Marist charism,

¹ The Second Marist International Mission Assembly (MIMA II) was held in Nairobi, Kenya, in September 2014. Organised under the auspices of the Institute of the Marist Brothers, it was a representative gathering of Marists – lay, religious and ordained – convened for them to reflect on Marist life and mission in the world today, and to name the priorities and strategies for moving forward. The full text of its communiqué can be found on the Institute’s website. www.champagnat.org.

prompting us to dance to the rhythm of drums, and directing our steps towards the Montagnes of our day”.

They then propose that Marists will be recognised as credible prophets in a distinctively Marist way only if and when they are “purposefully reaching out to the *Montagnes* of our day”, to be a significant presence among and with them. Among the key challenges and questions they pose for Marists is this one:

“How can we go in haste to the peripheries of poverty and exclusion to be with the young Montagnes of today? How can we help people to understand that getting to know Jesus Christ and his Gospel is a right for children and young people? How can our educational works be spaces that guarantee the rights of children and young people? What plans and projects should be our priority in order to engage in social transformation? How can we defend the rights of children in social and political forums?”

They affirm that one of the key opportunities for generating “greater vitality” for Marist spirituality and mission is the role of “the agencies and networks of solidarity and volunteering within the Marist world that are responding to the *Montagnes* of today, who are the reason for our mission.”

It is a particularly strong expression, that last one – that the “*Montagnes* of today” are the *raison d’être* for Marists, the reason that the Marist project exists at all. So it is well for us to ask ourselves who these Montagnes might be. Who are these young people to whose needs

and rights Marists are being called to respond in prophetic ways?

The answer would seem to be a self-evidently important one for contemporary Marists to find. Many may think that they intuitively know the answer already; indeed the text of the Mission Assembly’s communiqué suggests this, simply because nowhere does it really define the term “*Montagne*”. There are several traits at least strongly implied: that the *Montagnes* will be found on the peripheries of society; that they will be in poor circumstances; that they may have their basic human rights denied them. Are these the defining characteristics of who is to be a *Montagne*? Are there others? What can we learn from considering the situation of Jean-Baptiste Montagne, the youth whom Marcellin is described as visiting in 1816?

It is helpful for us to revisit the original story, not simply to get in touch with its historical facts and context – although these may prove enlightening in themselves – but to look at what it was about the story that cemented its place so prominently in the early discourse of Marcellin’s followers. Certainly, from the time of the founding Marist generation, Marcellin’s encounter with a “dying child” has been a much recounted event, even positioned as a galvanising event for Marcellin’s founding of the Brothers.

For those of a Jungian bent, the story has assumed the place and function of a “myth” – as it carries

something of the deeper truths, yearnings, and dreams of the group.² Without doubt, it has become a prominent thread of what some writers might describe as the “deep story” of the Marists.³

2. THE ORIGINAL CONTEXT

Marists of today often believe that they know well enough the basics of the Montagne story. What they may not realise is that it is an event that was constructed a long time after the death of this youth, using a seminal story that

was told from the beginning and connecting it with other data which came to light in the last century and which have been connected to it. It may surprise many Marists to learn that there is, in fact, no proven link between the original story and death of Jean-Baptiste Montagne, or even any evidence that Marcellin visited the Montagne home on the night in question. The young Montagne boy did indeed exist – we have his birth, death and burial records – but whether he is the “dying child” of the story appears to be highly questionable. Indeed, there is no record of any attempt to identify the child as J-B Montagne until the 1930s,⁴ and no active promotion of

² Roberto Clark in a study of Marist documents associated with the Montagne story and the significance of the story for Marists, also describes it has a myth in this sense. See Clark, R. [unpublished] *An Icon of the Marist Mission: The Montagne Teenager*. His article, however, accepts the historical authenticity of the story as “unquestionable”, as do others such as one by Brother Manuel Mesonero, “An icon of Marist mission: the young Montagne”, in *Marist Notebooks*, No.33, May 2015.

³ The expression comes from Lee, B. (2004) *The Beating of Great Wings: A Worldly Spirituality for Active, Apostolic Communities*. Mystic, CT: Twenty Third Publications. For a consideration of how the concrete may be applicable to a Marist context, see Hall, D. (2010) *Forming Australian Marist School Leaders in Uncertain Times: Friends of a Compelling God*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago.

⁴ Brother André Lanfrey has done some research into the naming of the dying boy. (*Le problème Montagne*. Unpublished paper, August 2015). Brother André was not able to find any nineteenth or early twentieth century accounts that identify the child (including in the official *Chronologie* of the Institute published in 1917). The first record he could find of anything is in a parish bulletin published in 1935 in the Parish of Le Bessat on the origins of the Marist Brothers. The child is identified as a boy of the hamlet of Les Palais near Le Bessat, who died on 28 October 1816. This is a somewhat surprisingly claim because at the time that Marcellin’s cause was introduced in the late 1880s, there was no recorded interest or support from the parish of Le Bessat, suggesting that there was no oral tradition there. Possibly on the basis of the parish priest’s claim, the Brother who was Vice-Postulator at the time and in charge of the Cause of Marcellin’s canonisation (and also a member of the Hermitage Province), Brother Joseph-Philippe, repeated the claim in short notice in the *Bulletin d’Institut* the following year (No.103, January 1936) and followed this up with an article in *La Revue Champagnat* (No.19, p.226), the same year. He was incorrect, however, with the name of the boy, calling him “Francois” rather than “Jean-Baptiste” (François was the father’s name) and also confusing the date of death with the date of burial. None of this suggests a strong pre-existing local tradition. After the 1930s, the tradition grew in the parish, more than the Institute. In 1957, the parish dedicated a side-altar to the event (still in the Church at Le Bessat) in the presence of the Superior General Brother Leonida and the General Council. Nevertheless, the name remained not well known in the Marist world.

the name until after 1966 when Marist scholar, Brother Gabriel Michel, linked the death and burial records of this boy with the old story that had been with us from the time of Marcellin.⁵ The link is theoretically possible, but there are difficulties with sustaining an argument for it. For the moment, however, let us recount the story as it has come to be told by modern-day Marists:

During the afternoon of 28th October 1816, just ten weeks after his arrival as curate in La Valla, Father Champagnat responded, without delay, to a sick-call from a family which lived in the hamlet of Les Palais, near Le Bessat, located on the top fringe of the parish – up on the Pilat plateau. A boy, Jean-Baptiste Montagne, born on 10th May 1800 and therefore sixteen years of age, was close to death. It was a demanding two-hour climb on foot from La Valla up to Le Bessat, and Marcellin arrived to find Jean-Baptiste very low. Not permitted to hear the boy's Confession because of Jean-Baptiste's apparent ignorance of even the most rudimentary elements of the Christian faith,⁶ Marcellin spent two hours with him, comforting him, offering him some basic catechesis, and bringing Jean-Baptiste to the point where the boy offered some simple prayers,

made an Act of Contrition, and was anointed.

Jean-Baptiste died just after Marcellin left him to visit another sick person in the house next door, something that the Founder was extremely sad to learn on his return to the Montagne house later that evening. At six o'clock the next morning, Jean-Baptiste's grief-stricken fifty-seven year old father, François, and his uncle, also called Jean-Baptiste, presented the body of their son and nephew to the mayor of La Valla, Jean-Baptiste Berne, so that the death could be duly recorded in the civil register and the burial take place. This happened two days later in nearby Tarentaise where the recently appointed Curé of that parish, M. Préher, officiated.

Marcellin wasted no time on his return in going down to the hamlet of La Rive where there lived a barely literate twenty-one year old former soldier, Jean-Marie Granjon, who worked as a servant. He was already known to Marcellin through his practical concern for the needy of the parish, and had actually brought the newly appointed curate to another sick person in the hamlet of La Rive earlier that month.

⁵ Michel, G. (1966) *Bulletin de l'Institut*, No.204. What is more significant about Brother Gabriel's belief is that he became a long-term member of the Community at the Hermitage. Between 1967 and 1989, over three thousand Brothers passed through the Hermitage (Cf. *FMS Message*, No.4, January 1989), and most of them would have been guided by Brother Gabriel. The name of Montagne became cemented into Marist mythology.

⁶ Diocesan guidelines for pastoral practice then in place in Lyon precluded priests from giving absolution to people who failed to meet a number of criteria. One of these was "ignorance of the principal mysteries of the faith".



The record of J-B Montagne's burial at Tarentaise on 30 October 1816, signed among others by his father and uncle.

Marcellin invited Jean-Marie to consider being one of the first members of a new group of catechist-teachers that he intended to start without delay. Within four days, Marcellin had had similar discussions with Jean-Baptiste Audras from the hamlet of Le Pioré,⁷ a boy still just short of his fifteenth birthday but whom Marcellin undoubtedly knew well as his confessor and knew to have a spiritual maturity beyond his years.

Within weeks he had made arrangements to rent a house from a M. Bonner on the top edge of the town, not far from the presbytery. Around his many other duties as parish curate, Marcellin readied the house and welcomed Jean-Marie and Jean-Baptiste as its first occupants in the middle of winter, 2 January 1817,

the date traditionally celebrated as the Foundation Day of the Institute.

The above synopsis can be put together by cross-referencing a range of primary and secondary sources. Some of these documents, however, also bring a degree of confusion to the story. There are problems with the location, the year, the age of the child, the improbability of the Montagne family's disconnection from the faith and their local parish, and also the low likelihood that a priest to anoint the dying boy would have been sought from La Valla rather than from nearby Tarentaise.

First, all of the early accounts (among them the *Life* by Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet; the *Memoir* of Brother Sylvestre; and the Notes of

⁷ Spelt "Péorey" today.

Father Bourdin which recorded the actual words of Father Champagnat⁸) speak of the event taking place with a child in *foothills* of Mt Pilat whereas, of course, Les Palais is up on the plateau. None of them names the child. The Bourdin notes are additionally interesting because of the sequence in which he orders the events. This entry in his notes seems straightforward enough:

“What made the work urgent: a child sick in the foothills of Pilat, needed the sacraments... Goes to a neighbour for a moment, returns, child dead, reflection: “How many children far from the means of salvation... if instructed, know how to repent, know...”⁹

But Bourdin – quoting what he has heard directly from Father Champagnat own lips – lists this encounter after Marcellin’s recruiting Jean-Marie and two other brothers, his buying the house, the beginning of the brothers’ work with young people, and La Valla’s pre-existing “drunken schoolmaster” leaving town. This all takes us well into 1818, eighteen months after the death of J-B Montagne. Perhaps Bourdin does not

mean to imply a chronology in his notes but the order is curious, nonetheless, especially when considered against other inconsistencies among the accounts. Brother Laurent, the next oldest account after that of Bourdin, is clear that the event occurred in 1818.¹⁰

A third reason to question whether young Montagne is the dying child is prompted by the age given in the different documents. While Brother François, in his notebooks, describes the young person’s age at seventeen, all other accounts – including the official version of the *Life* by Brother Jean-Baptiste – have the child at eleven or twelve. We know J-B Montagne was sixteen when he died. Even though chronological age might have been regarded to be of less importance at the time than level of maturity, it is another inconsistency. Taken together, and from French writers known for an often pedantic accuracy, it is not easy to explain away, let alone to reconcile, these apparently varying accounts. Gabriel Michel argues that the boy could have been malnourished and so appeared to look younger

⁸ Father Bourdin replaced Father Séon at The Hermitage in the summer vacation of 1828. He was already seeing himself as something of an historian of the Society of Mary, and so took it upon himself to interview Father Champagnat about the first years, and to make notes of these conversations. These notes (and copious others) he kept, only for them to be discovered on his death many years later, without his long-promised history of the Society ever coming to be written. His notes were not, therefore, available to Brother Jean-Baptiste when he wrote the *Life*.

⁹ *Memoir Bourdin*, #6.

¹⁰ *Memoir of Brother Laurent*. #1. Brother Laurent was the third man to join the La Valla community, at the end of 1817. Shortly after Marcellin’s death, and in response to a general invitation from Brother François, Laurent penned – in language as economically written as it was poorly expressed – his own brief memoir of the Founder in a few pages of writing

that he was. Perhaps this was the case, but it is only conjecture, and it is stretching credulity to claim that a young man of that age, in that place, at that time, would not have already made his first Holy Communion. Socially, culturally and religiously, this was the norm for all children before the age of twelve, most especially so in a region as socially conservative as that of Le Bessat. The documentary evidence also suggests that the Montagne family was comfortable with the Church and antagonistic to the secular order imposed by the Revolution: Jean-Baptiste's father and uncle signed their names on the Church-issued burial certificate reproduced above, but only made their mark on the civilly-issued death certificate two days before. This was common at the time for people who complied only begrudgingly with the new order.¹¹ It is unlikely, therefore, that the historical Jean-Baptiste Montagne at age sixteen would have missed out on making his Communion, and therefore being prepared for it.

The significance of the child's age is that first Holy Communion, typically made between ten and twelve years of age, represented a significant rite of passage out of childhood. A child needed to be appropriately

catechised before this event, equipped with the religious knowledge and understanding that would serve them into adult life. This helps us to understand the way that Brother Laurent begins his *Memoir*:

"In 1818, Monsieur Champagnat, a priest, who was then the curate in La Valla, was heartbroken to find the ignorance that reigned in the parish, especially among the young people. He discovered some children aged between 10 and 12 years of age who didn't know why they were on earth, or even that there was a God. So he resolved to form a society of young men whom he instructed himself and formed in all the virtues, so that they could instruct the young ones, that is to say, the poor children of the countryside.¹²"

Another thing to which Laurent draws our attention is that the situation of the "dying child" was not a one-off, and that Marcellin was growing in his appreciation of the extent of this problem for at least two years after taking up residence in La Valla. The civil registers indicate that seven relatively young people over the age of seven died in Marcellin's first year at La Valla, coming from six different hamlets.¹³ There were others in subsequent years, including one in 1819 who was of an age and in similar cir-

¹¹ Brother André Lanfrey, personal communication with the author.

¹² Brother Laurent, *idem*.

¹³ For a more detailed discussion of this, see Lanfrey, A. "The Troubles of the Revolution and those of the Empire", *Marist Notebooks*, Vol. 31, May 2013. Interestingly, one of these young people to die (Jean-Claude Tardy, aged eleven) also came from Les Palais, dying in January 1817, just three months after the young Montagne.

cumstances to J-B Montagne.¹⁴ There may, therefore, have been something of a later conflation of a number of events, even in the mind of Marcellin, as evidenced by what he tells Bourdin in 1828-29. This is not surprising, perhaps, given the intensity of his feelings about things at the time. His biographer, Brother Jean-Baptiste, chooses strong words to describe Marcellin's emotional response to the predicament of these young people. He writes that he was sorely afflicted by it, and the idea to found a community of catechist-teacher brothers was something that "pursued him". Laurent uses the very same word as Jean-Baptiste, *affligé*, to describe Father Champagnat's emotional state.¹⁵

Finally, there is the problem of why Father Champagnat would have been

the priest called to attend J-B Montagne, when there were two priests at Tarentaise, just a twenty-minute walk away. To get a message to La Valla would have been a two-hour trek down to that town, with no guarantee that he would have been there, then a steep two-hour climb back. It was M. Péhrer, from Tarentaise, who officiated at the burial two days later. While Les Palais was technically in the La Valla parish because of pre-Revolutionary arrangements, it was more convenient for the people of Les Palais to associate themselves with Tarentaise – as attested by burial and baptismal records. It is also significant to note that the newly appointed curate at Tarentaise was in fact Jean-Baptiste Seyve, not only one of the twelve Marist aspirants who with Marcellin had made their pledge at

¹⁴ The death of this boy (also aged 16) took place a couple of years later on 29 December 1819. Although, again, we do not know if Marcellin was in attendance, we do know that Jean-Marie Granjon was. In fact it was a young cousin of Jean Marie – Antoine Granjon, son of Paul-Gabriel and Jeanne-Marie Granjon, who lived in the town where Jean-Marie was born on 22 December 1794: Doizieu, in the hamlet of La Terrasse. Brother Gabriel Michel has given an account of this event, drawing from information in the civil register of La Valla. See Michel, G. *op.cit.*

¹⁵ If, however, it is felt useful to focus on one child, then Brother André Lanfrey (*Le problème Montagne*) has identified five possible names:

	Date of burial	Name	Hamlet	Age	Priest
1	31/05/1817	François Matricon	Laval	6-7	Rebod
2	04/02/1818	Jean-Baptiste Françon	Les Fons	10-11	Rebod
3	12/04/1818	Jean-Claude Farat	Au bourg	12-13	Rebod
4	08/05/1819	Jean-Marie Ginot	Rossillol	9½-10	Champagnat
5	09/06/1819	Jean-Claude Farat	La Farat or La Fourchina	8	Champagnat

He prefers No. 5, Jean-Claude Farat, from the hamlet of La Farat or La Fourchina (today "La Faré"), giving weight to the location which is consistent with the early accounts. His death was in 1818, which places the event later than the establishment of the Brothers, and consistent with the Bourdin memoir. The boy is, however, a little younger than those accounts. Brother André thinks it more improbable, nonetheless, that would be No.3 (a boy of the same name) because his hamlet is perched up between the Gier and the Ban valleys – but his age is more consistent with the early accounts, and he died in 1818 – closer to the gathering of the first Brothers' community.

Fourvière just three months previously, but someone from the Founder's home region (born at St Genest-Malifaux) and of the very same age. They were close friends. There is no obvious reason as to why such a good young priest who was based nearby would not have been the one sent for by the family.

So, on the balance of probabilities, it seems problematic to claim that Jean-Baptiste Montagne was in fact the dying boy. It is much more likely to have been another child of the parish. That does not mean, however, that we should forget the Montagne story. In fact, it is most instructive to look at *why* this story and this boy have captured Marist imagination, since Brother Gabriel Michel started recounting the name and place to Marist pilgrims in the late 1960s. But let us approach it as nuanced mythology rather than dubious history. Like all good foundation myths, it tells us more about *why* than *what*.

So, we return to this event, as we have come to recount it, in the small hamlet Les Palais, and to Marcellin's response to it, seeing them as keys of a deeper story that can continue to speak to us today as we determine the shape and priority for Marist life and mission. Who was Jean-Baptiste Montagne? What were the circumstances of his time, his place and his family? If we see him as emblematic of wider need, what can we glean from a greater knowledge of his particular situation?

First, let us consider his hamlet of Les Palais. It was no more than a small cluster of houses, only four families, just a kilometre or so from Le Bessat, on the plateau of the Pilat ranges. The twenty-seven *feux* of Le Bessat (average household size, four to five persons) made it the second biggest population centre in La Valla. It is worth noting that ninety percent of La Valla's people lived in its sixty-six hamlets and only about ten percent in the town itself. Although Le Bessat was part of the commune of La Valla and the canton of Saint-Chamond (as a result of its being under the control of the Marquis of Saint-Chamond before the Revolution), it tended to orient itself more towards Saint-Etienne as its major town. Despite its having something of a reputation as remote place and having an altitude of 1200m, Le Bessat was in some ways less isolated than La Valla itself, as it was close to the main road between Saint-Etienne and the Rhône Valley, and situated in flatter, more open country. In that respect at least, it was more like Marcellin's hometown of Marhles than the hillside town of La Valla. From a detailed census taken of La Valla completed in 1815 and a record of the amounts that individual families were able to contribute to the requisitions being made by the occupying Austrian troops, we have a good insight into the wealth of the people of the town, and can see that they were a little below the mean for the commune, but were comparatively homogenous – no extremes of richness or poverty. A large number of the men were na-

med as *journaliers* (day labourers, and therefore likely to be of more mediocre means) rather than being *cultivateurs* (farmers), but there are four or five men who were of more considerable wealth as they were listed as *laboureurs* (that is ploughmen – men who had sufficient resources to maintain their own oxen or even a horse, and with yolk and plough). La Valla had a range of wealth across its hamlets, from those better-off ones nearer to Saint-Chamond (and including François’s Maisonnettes), to quite poor ones tucked up in the recesses of the valley, to those of more average means. Le Bessat was more in the last category. Indeed, it was secure enough to be able to hold two trade fairs each year,¹⁶ something that did not happen in La Valla.

Its people grew some crops and kept animals, and carried out the typical cottage industries of the region especially during the winter, but one of the principal industries was timber. This was a contentious matter. Gaining momentum in the years of the Revolution and continuing for decades, the great communal forest of Pilat was anarchically plundered for timber by the local people. It gives an insight into the ruggedness of the place and the independent, strong-willed mentality of the people of Le

Bessat. They were tough people. Such lawlessness did not, however, translate into faithlessness. Although, they were not a stand-alone parish, there had been a chapel in the town since the sixteenth century (sold during the Revolution but bought back by the local people in 1807). They petitioned to become a parish with a church and priest, something achieved by 1827. The success of Brother Laurent as a catechist of both children and adults in the years 1818-1819 indicated an openness to religion, even though the snows and bad roads denied people much Sacramental ministry for a good part of the year. We know that during the years of the Revolution, when the Archdiocese of Lyon effectively suspended its parochial structures and organised its priests into undercover teams of missionaries – the so-called Linsolas missions – that the Pilat plateau region was not neglected. This was a “white” area, a resistant area, and fugitive priests would have been welcomed and sheltered.

François Montagne was a carpenter, and therefore profited from the felling of the forests that had been taking place. He was literate, as we can see from his signing of his son’s record of burial.¹⁷ He was probably conservative in his politics, suspicious of the new order – as is sug-

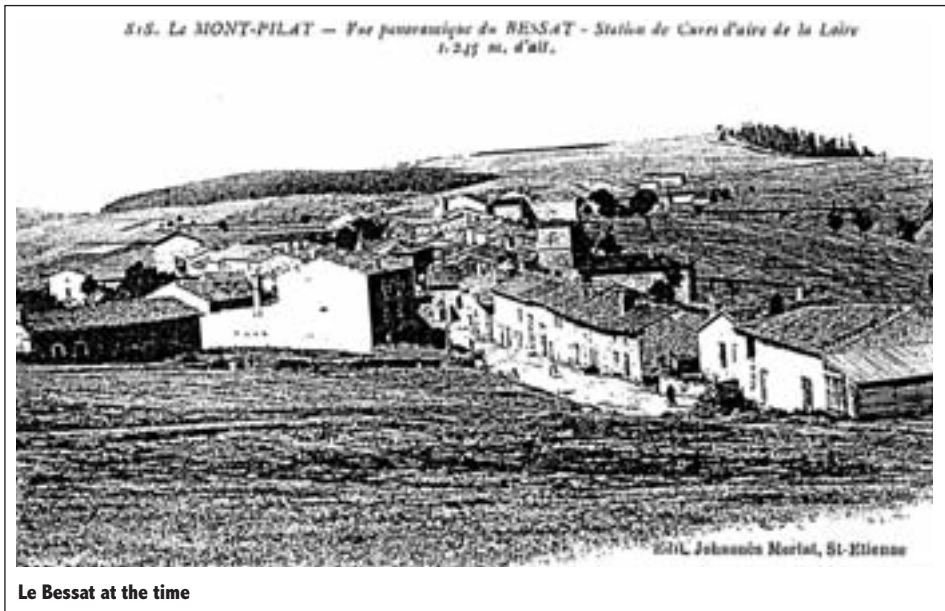
¹⁶ These were at the beginning and at the end of summer. The first was on the feast day of the town’s patron saint, St Claude (6 June), and the second on the feast of the Transfiguration, then celebrated on 6 August.

¹⁷ The ability to write was, at the time, seen as a relatively high skill. Many people were only able to read, but not to write. It is not known if Clemence Porta, the mother of Jean-Baptiste, was also literate.

gested by his not signing his name (rather, making his mark) on his son's death certificate in the civil register of La Valla, but apparently feeling free to sign his name in the Church register at Tarentaise just two days later. Their house seems to have been a comparatively solid structure as the accompanying pictures show, indicating a family of apparently secure means. It is no hovel, and the family is not destitute. The photographs are taken at different times during the last century before the house's demolition about thirty years ago.

The encounter with the dying child is, in some versions of the story, directly and causally linked to Marcellin's decision to found the Brothers. This is quite important. In this sense, Jean-Marie Granjon is as at least as

important a figure in the story as Jean-Baptiste Montagne. From Bourdin, we learn that Marcellin had "long held" the conviction that there was a need for teacher-catechists and that he felt called to establish such a group, just as other priests were doing. He had confided as much to his fellow seminarian Duplay as early as 1810 when they were still at the minor seminary at Verrières. From Brother Laurent and others, we know that Marcellin became sharpened in his resolve to do this after his arrival at La Valla when he found so many children at the age of first Holy Communion ill-prepared to do so. It was something to which he gave urgent attention. These testimonies from women who as girls were prepared for their first Holy Communion by Father Champagnat at that time (recorded when



his cause for canonisation was introduced in the late 1880s) capture something of the passion with which the curate went about this work:

"I still remember Father Champagnat, who prepared me for my First Communion in 1817. It was the first time he had the pleasure of preparing children for First Communion. I will never forget the touching exhortation he gave me before giving me absolution for the first time; I could hear his deep faith in his earnest words. It was as though he poured his whole soul into them. He taught catechism in his surplice, standing in the middle between us and the boys. Everyone's eyes were riveted on him. He was strict with those who didn't know their lesson, but he was also very just. (Catherine Prat)"

"I went to Father Champagnat's catechism lessons, and though I was very young, I loved to listen to him, and especially to see the church full of grown-ups who followed his explanations so carefully. He spoke simply, so that the most uneducated could understand, but he said such beautiful and moving things that he delighted everyone. People used to say, "Let's go to the catechism lesson; Father Champagnat is giving it." And the church would be full. (Françoise Baché)"

"As for his catechisms, we hurried to them, and despite the cold, the snow, the terrible roads and the distance (it took us over an hour), we were always the first to arrive. Then he would tease our friends from the town, telling them, "You're lazy! Look at the children from Saut-du-Gier: they have to walk more than an hour, and they're always the first ones here.



House Les Palais

You're a couple of steps away,
and you're always the last."
He made us feel very proud of ourselves.
(Louise and Marie-Anne Duvernay)"

We can see that Marcellin ministered to people of all ages, just as later

he agreed for his Brothers to be involved in evening classes for adults and in trade-training with disengaged young men and in teacher education, but his heart was most especially drawn to children, to open to them the joys that he knew from his faith. It was their God-ordained right, and he was passionately driven to making it happen for them. Indeed, he felt a responsibility to do so, for the alternative meant that – in the prevailing theology of the time – they risked eternal separation from God. The Montagne story needs to be refracted through this lens.

3. THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE MONTAGNE STORY

Just as the story of Marcellin and the unnamed dying child was self-consciously seminal for the founding Marist generation, so can be the Montagne story for Marists of the twenty-first century. From the foregoing discussion, four threads of what we have come to call the Montagne event seem to be of its essence.

3.1. *Marcellin's passion and compassion*

The Marist spirituality document *Water from the Rock* begins by proposing that Marcellin's "passion for

God and compassion for people" have been the defining factors in the development of Marist spirituality. This is obvious nowhere more poignantly than in the Montagne story. Reference has been made above to the contemporary writers' use of the word "afflicted" to describe Marcellin's emotional response to the kind of ignorance, specifically ignorance of a loving God and their eternal destiny, which is exemplified and personified in the young Montagne. Such affliction at the sight of a young person's religious ignorance has to spring largely from one's own deep religious experience. The *Constitutions* of the Marist Brothers put it this way in describing the core of Marcellin's "charism":

"Led by the Spirit, Marcellin was seized by the love that Jesus and Mary had for him and for others. His experience of this, as well as his openness to events and to people, is the wellspring of his spirituality and of his apostolic zeal. It made him sensitive to the needs of his times, especially to the ignorance concerning religion among young people and the poor circumstances in which they were placed. His faith and eagerness to do God's will led him to realise that his mission was to "make Jesus Christ known and loved." He often said: "Every time I see a child, I long to teach him his catechism, to make him realise how much Jesus Christ has loved him." It was this attitude that led him to found our Institute for the Christian education of the young, especially those most in need.¹⁸"

¹⁸ *Constitutions of the Marist Brothers*, #2.

Although Marcellin was passionate about evangelising the young, and unmeasured in giving himself to it, this was not borne of the kind of religious fanaticism that can sour the taste of religion for many people – both then and now.

The evidence of Marcellin's impact on people does not reveal in any way someone who imposed himself or his convictions on others forcefully or disrespectfully. Indeed, a recurrent theme of his conferences and the early Marist documents is it would be through affection, charm and inspiration that the hearts and minds of young people would be most compellingly won.¹⁹

His starting point, as we know well, was love for young people. It is important, in this context, to see the Montagne story as an example of Marcellin's gentle engagement with a real person, open to the needs of that person; it is not some detached or cerebral commitment to the education or evangelisation of the needy. The story reminds Marists that, whatever words and concepts they may choose to put around their identity and focus, if they are not in touch with the lives and needs of real people in real time, then they are not living the kind of Christian life that Marcellin would have wanted them to live.

3.2. Evangelisation through education

The action into which Marcellin launches himself is essentially educative. This is key for understanding Marcellin and his project. What does he do with young Jean-Baptiste in the story? What is his intuitive response? While it is to sit with the boy, to care for and comfort him, it is more than that: he seeks to bring the Gospel alive in him, and to do that by instructing him, bringing him to the point where the boy himself can verbalise his own prayers. So, it is not the kind of evangelising that might happen at a parish mission or a revivalist meeting – the kind that may tap only into the heart. It is also the head with which Marcellin is concerned. The two go together for him: education and evangelisation.

This is amply evident in his actions over the succeeding three years: his employment of a former De La Salle Brother, Claude Maisonneuve from his home region of Marhles, to teach children first in the hamlet of Les Sagnes then to take charge of the school in La Valla itself; his getting Maisonneuve to train the Brothers in the simultaneous method of teaching and Marcellin's own training of the Brothers in the Sulpician method of catechising; his sending them first on Sundays to catechise in the hamlets

¹⁹ See, for example, the last four chapters of *Avis, Leçons, Sentences* where such sentiments are numerous, or Chapter 11 of *The Teachers Guide* on the topic of *Discipline*.

of the parish; and within two years to have taken over the town school in Marhles and also in La Valla. The sisters Duverney quoted above, and who were girls in Les Sagnes in 1817, recalled in 1888:

“Once a month the curate came to see his little school, examined it, gave rewards to the boys and girls who had earned them and gently reproved those who were not working hard enough.”

Intuitively, Marcellin was a teacher. He was also by nature very solicitous, unfailingly kind, and quite practical in caring for people in material need. But when it came especially to young people, it was not enough for him to offer care and sustenance; he was wanted to educate them.

Jean-Marie Granjon, his first recruit, may have been drawn to a broader scope of ministry. Indeed, it has been suggested that until the demise of Jean-Marie’s influence in the mid-1820s, there was a wider focus to the Brothers’ work – care for the poor as much as schooling – but from at least 1824 and the building of the Hermitage, the chief concern became increasingly centred on education.²⁰ This was Marcellin’s chosen priority. Later on, when orphanages were taken on, programmes for the hearing impaired introduced, and other projects accepted at least in principle in

his letters, the primary place of education was always inherent.

For Marcellin, there was a natural and healthy symbiosis between education and evangelisation. For Brothers to be catechists only was not enough; they were also to be teachers. He believed in schools as a privileged place to engage with young people, and that needed to be run by teachers of religious faith.

The itinerant teachers (*les instituteurs ambulants*), on whom the more remote regions of France depended for the schools that ran during the winter months, had a poor reputation in some quarters.

They were caricatured – perhaps unfairly – as heavy-drinking men, of questionable personal morality, often associated with promulgating secularist and anti-religious sentiment, and poorly trained in the craft of teaching and so given frequently to capricious cruelty in their treatment of children. As a priest, Marcellin would have had first-hand experience of the duplicity of such men as they tried to get their Certificates of Good Conduct and Manners which came to be required for them to have a teacher’s *brevet*.²¹ There were, of course, many exceptions to this rather negative caricature – Maisonneuve himself being one of them. There was, no-

²⁰ Marist historian, Brother André Lanfrey, argues this way.

²¹ Brother Pierre Zind in his articles *Sur les Traces du P. Champagnat* cites a number of reports from school inspectors that support this view of the itinerant teachers.

netheless, after the Revolution a general caution among both the clergy and town mayors towards teachers “without home or place” as also being “without faith or law”.²²

As the nineteenth century went on, and the tide of secularist and anti-religious opinion grew in many quarters, the integrated role of teacher-catechist, undertaken by people who lived what they taught, came to be seen as every more at the core of Marcellin’s project. This was certainly the case when many of the foundational Marist documents were being written and edited, and the Institute was growing. The significance of the encounter with the dying boy was consequently enhanced. The story pivots on its being an evangelising moment, and explicitly so. In the event that is described, the unambiguously core need of young Jean-Baptiste that Father Champagnat addresses is the boy’s ignorance of a loving God and of the meaning of human existence²³. It was the Founder’s attending to this duality of need, and then his response immediately to recruit Jean-Marie Granjon, that came to be placed at the centre of the story by Marists.²⁴

3.3. A distinctive style

A characteristic Marist style is also evident in the Montagne story, reflecting traits that continue to mark the distinctive way that Marists go about their work of evangelisation through education. First is Marcellin’s readiness to go out from his own place, to make the somewhat demanding journey up to Le Bessat, and to enter the home of Jean-Baptiste and to sit by his bed. This three-faceted disposition is Marian: to be like Mary who set out in haste, who went into the hill country, and who entered the home of her cousin to greet her. It represents a willingness to change one’s perspective and one’s heart-space to that of the other – the one in need – to go into their space and to meet them there. It is apostolic and other-focussed in its intuiting: I will go to out to you; I am not waiting in my own securities for you to come to me.

Teachers who work with young people of another generation and, even more so, those of another culture or another socio-economic group, are called to do this continually. Then, like Elizabeth in whom new life stirs as a function of her en-

²² The couplet in French: “*sans feu ni lieu / sans foi ni loi*”

²³ For the latter point – “the meaning of human existence” – see Marist Brothers’ Constitutions #164, which itself draws from *Gaudium et Spes* #12, 22.

²⁴ The duality of need – for the child to appreciate both the love of God and the meaning of life – reflects exactly the first sentence of Brother Laurent’s memoir (quoted in the article) in which Laurent describes the source of Marcellin’s affliction, and what prompted him to act.

counter with Mary, the main action happens for Marists through their actual relating with the young people. Marcellin remained with young Jean-Baptiste for a full two hours. He was present to him, directly and personally. He related with him in a person-to-person way, no doubt sharing something of himself with the boy, something of his own heart. Marists talk about “presence” and “simplicity” to describe such an approach – two terms that Marcellin adopted from the writings of St Francis de Sales and made his own.

To be readily available to young people, to walk in their shoes (being empathetic rather than sympathetic), to work with them simply, personally and relationally, and to seek to make a difference in their lives through the Gospel, are all qualities which Marists continue to honour in one another.

To these we should add the qualities of creative pragmatism, of decisiveness, and even of audacity, three Marist traits that we can also see in the story. In the account, as it has come to be told, the encounter with the dying boy is linked to Marcellin’s founding of the Brothers. Within a week he had signed on two recruits. Within a month he had a house for them. Within three months he had built some furniture with his own hands and had installed them in it. Within six months he had given them a religious/teacher’s costume, and he had employed someone to train them professionally. Within twelve months he had gone into debt (with

Courveille) to buy the house, and was soon to take over two town schools. Who was he to do all that – a country curate without means, in an unlikely corner of France, with numerous doubters and cynics among both the senior clergy and the civil authorities, and with recruits who through both age and education seemed ill equipped for the project? Creatively pragmatic, decisive, and even audacious. Marists still like that about one another.

3.4. Inclusivity

Possibly a more contentious question to address in the story, as we have reconstructed it, is to ask how we should categorise Jean-Baptiste Montagne or, more pointedly, the extent to which we should categorise him at all. There are some who see Jean-Baptiste as poor, and that it is his poverty which most obviously defines him. It follows, in this line of thinking, that the “Montagnes of today” will be primarily those young people who are poor. Others understand that Jean-Baptiste’s significance is to be found principally in his being on the margins of La Valla and the neglected peripheries of French society; so it is among the marginalised youth, those at risk and on the edge, that Marists will find the Montagnes of today. Others may point to his ignorance; others to his lack of education in faith. Some may take the perspective that the spirit of the times – liberty, equality, fraternity, each of which his cir-

cumstances clearly denied him – meant his basic human rights as a young person needed addressing, and that Marcellin’s actions struck a blow for young people in such situations.

A dispassionate analysis of the broader context of the time and place, does not really support any of these claims exclusively, or a contention that the figure of Jean-Baptiste Montagne should be too narrowly defined. Perhaps the major criteria for Marcellin’s attention were that Jean-Baptiste was young, that he was there, but most critically, that he was lacking in his sense of a loving God. His religious ignorance and Marcellin’s response to that are put in rather strong terms in the story, perhaps even exaggerated for the sake of emphasising this key element of the boy’s need. But, let us consider some of Jean-Baptiste’s other characteristics in the context of their time and place.

First, the Montagne family was hardly wealthy but neither was it destitute. The family seems to have been secure enough, both financially and socially. Admittedly, they were located in a part of the parish that was below average, but there were other poorer hamlets. In cities such as Lyon, and closer at Saint-Etienne and Saint-Chamond, the industrial revolution was creating an urban poor that was in more dire circumstances than many of the people in rural areas. We can be sure that Marcellin would have personally seen such

people, including young people, in each of those places. Additionally we can note that, within the Le Bessat area, François Montagne was relatively well placed since he was a tradesman. Second, Le Bessat (and therefore Les Palais) was not desperately remote or cut-off from the life and commerce of the region; indeed it was less so than was La Valla.

It is true that it was quite a distance from La Valla itself, but that was a problem more for Marcellin in getting up there, rather than for the people of Le Bessat themselves. Depending on the time year, they had relatively good access to the main road to Saint-Etienne in one direction and down to Annonay and the Rhône in the other.

Third, there is no doubting that Jean-Baptiste was not well educated. But in this, he was in the much same situation as a large number of young people of the time and region. There would have been young people situated both more and less advantageously than him. Last, while it is of course undeniable that as a function of their overall circumstances, he was not enjoying the freedom and the fullness of human life to which they had a right, he was only typical.

So, how and to what extent should we categorise young Montagne? To resolve this particular question, it may be helpful to recall once again that the story has some degree of confection about it. Jean-Baptiste is em-

blematic of a wider problem that Marcellin felt driven to address: that young people – represented perhaps most poignantly by those who were approaching the age when they should be joyfully making their first Holy Communion, and finishing school to learn a trade or follow some other course of life as good citizens and good Christians – were often woefully positioned to do so.

It is to Marcellin's response over the ensuing twenty-three years that we need to look, as much as to his immediate response at La Valla to the incident with the dying child. Marcellin, in fact, established schools and projects – over fifty of them – in a wide diversity of situations: smaller and larger towns, richer and poorer ones. The fourth school he took on, for example, was a large one in the comparatively well-heeled and centrally-located government town of Bourg Argental. Later, when Marcellin agreed to take on the management of some orphanages in major towns and cities such as Lyon, it was to address the situation of young people in even worse situations than those in some country areas.

Other projects that to which Marcellin was attracted in the 1830s – for example Bishop Devie's invitation to take over an agricultural training facility in the Diocese of Belley to cater for the growing numbers of unskilled therefore unemployable young men or, in the last letter he ever wrote, for the Brothers to work with disengaged urban youth in a suburb of Paris²⁵ – suggest that we should be cautious about placing overly narrow limits on Marcellin's choices in mission.

A considered examination of such choices suggest that Marcellin was in fact quite broad in the cast of his endeavours, and there is ample evidence to indicate his pastoral engagement among better placed people as well as his special efforts for those in poor circumstances.

The telling point is that he proactively included disadvantaged young people, having them in the same schoolroom as those from families of bourgeoisie, civil servants and well-off farmers. It is this inclusivity that is defining, and was in fact somewhat counter-cultural. To become a good Christian and a good citizen was the right of all young people.

²⁵ See Letters 28 and 339 for revealing Marcellin's openness to these two projects. To support the idea that his involvement with orphanages was as much about education as it was about care for abandoned youth, see the agreement he made with the board of the Denuzière orphanage in Lyon, which accompanies Letter 306.

CONCLUSION:

The Montagne Story as an archetype of Marist Ministry

The story of Marcellin's encounter with the dying child is, like all good founding myths, a tale that one generation should to continue to pass onto the next, as a way of maintaining integrity and identity, and of defining deeper purposes. But such myths also risk being read simplistically. One key for Marists in their unlocking of the Montagne story is for them to see it in the context of its origins.

First, it is to recognise that, while the story has some basis in fact, it was well over a century before there was thought to be any need to give the child a name. It is more helpful to see the story as emblematic of a more general situation, one concerned with young people on threshold of adult life. Arguably, J-B Montagne's two greatest claims for the Founder's attention, in the story, are simply that he was there in Marcellin's parish and that he was young.

Second, it is important to see a passion for evangelisation of the young as the chief motivating factor for Marcellin, born of his conviction that no young person, irrespective of his or her personal situation, should be denied the liberating knowledge of Jesus and his Gospel.

The story turns on evangelisation, and Jean-Baptiste's need for it. The approach to this evangelisation is intrinsically educative, directed to the mind as well as the heart. It is prompted by an intuition that it is insufficient only to bring comfort and care to young people in need; it is also important to empower them to grow, both in their faith and in their capacity to become engaged members of society.

As the story of the encounter with the dying child came to gain significance among the founding generation, it was this purpose that grabbed them and, even more importantly, their vocation to be personifications of a living Gospel for the young people in their care. It is in this context that a nascent Marist style of education and evangelisation is evident in the story: one sparked by empathy and passion, grounded in an affective and relational approach to young people, and marked by an unaffected simplicity, personal presence, creative pragmatism, profound respect and, when needed, a bold audacity.

Through all of this, it is a ministry undertaken by people so affected by their own experience of the love of God that they cannot but live it and share it. While, no young person, whatever his or her circumstances, should be excluded from such ministry, no effort is spared for those

most especially in need of it. In this sense Jean-Baptiste Montagne is all young people, wherever we may find them. Like Mary, however, Marists remain especially ready to set out to find those in particular need, and to feel at home with them in their space.

As we contemplate the Montagne myth, it is not Jean-Baptiste, in the final analysis, on whom we should be focussed. Perhaps this is one reason why the early Marist chroniclers

did not give a name to the “dying child”. That child represented all young people whose circumstances meant they had a diminished capacity for appreciating who they were as a son or daughter of God and what the Gospel of Jesus Christ could mean in their lives. The focus is, rather, on those who respond to this need and what is needed for them to be the kind of Marist evangeliser that Marcellin imagined. It is a story ultimately about the reader.

THE MEETING WITH A “SICK CHILD IN THE PILAT FOOTHILLS”

An historical re-examination of the Montagne hypothesis



Br André Lanfrey

The lead-in to the bicentenary of Institute’s foundation began in 2015 with the “Montagne Year”. This was quite legitimate. But now that this commemoration is a little behind us, we can complement by re-visiting the historical research regarding an encounter historicity of which is both certain and problematic. As suggested by Brother Michael Green, there should be a clear distinction between history and myth, although it is not the case to take the first as legitimate and the second as irrelevant. On the contrary, it seems to me that these two approaches have their own legitimacy, but it is important not to unduly amalgamate one with the other.

Did Father Champagnat visit and anoint a dying child early in his ministry, yes or no? My answer is yes. Was this child Jean-Baptiste Montagne, who died in Les Palais at the end of 1816? According to me, certainly not. In that case, who could it be? I have a hypothesis that it occurred in 1819, a later date. By developing it, I will try to show that the foun-

ation of the Brothers in La Valla had two stages: the first began in 1816 with Jean-Marie Granjon and Jean-Baptiste Audras; and the second, in 1819, when Marcellin, inspired by his encounter with a dying child, persuaded his Brothers, during the retreat of September 1819, to move on from a simple lay parochial association to the project of a Marist religious congregation.

I will attempt to develop this hypothesis step by step.

1. HISTORICAL SOURCES REGARDING A SICK CHILD IN THE PILAT FOOTHILLS

The oldest and most reliable document comes from Jean-Antoine Bourdin, a Marist Father who lived in the Hermitage from the end of 1828 to November 1831. He left us some notes on the origins of the Marist Brothers that he wrote around 1830, and which he intended to be part of

a comprehensive book that was never actually written (OM2/doc 754)¹.

Most of these brief notes are based on conversations with Father Champagnat. They begin by stating that his project started in the seminary; then they recall his meeting in September-October with Jean-Marie Granjon (§1), the troubles of buying a house, the difficulties with the parish priest and the town teacher, and the welcoming of poor children by Brother Jean-Marie (§2-5). The notes finally deal with a topic that is of particular interest for us:

Need to hasten the project: a sick child in the foothills of Mt Pilat, need for a means... He goes to the neighbor's house for a moment, comes back and finds him dead. Reflection: how many children go astray from the way of salvation... If they get instruction, they will be able to repent, they will be able to...²

The first part of the notes concludes with a general remark:

"He was the curate for nine-and-a-half years – all the time working on the project, Marthes, Saint-Sauveur. Eight establishments, and nine with La Valla.."

So nothing could be clearer: Father Champagnat himself told Father Bourdin about his encounter with a "sick child in the foothills of Mt Pilat", who died immediately after his visit, and

elicited in him the intention to hasten with his project. But the event is not clearly dated: was it before meeting Granjon or after the community had become a center of apostolic action after 1817-19? The location is more precise: at the foot of Mt Pilat, that is, in the upper Gier Valley. As to the identity of the child, there is nothing said.

The expression "need for a means" is not difficult to interpret if we consider it as a consequence of his haste regarding the project. For Marcellin, founding the Brothers is "a means" to stop children from living and dying in religious ignorance.

2. BROTHER JEAN-BAPTISTE'S INTERPRETATION

In the *Life* (Part 1, Chapter 6, p.81), Brother Jean-Baptiste meticulously described this encounter, which would have taken place after Marcellin contacted Jean-Marie Granjon at the end of 1816:

He was summoned to a hamlet, one day, in order to hear a sick boy's confession. As usual, he set out at once [...] Greatly upset at finding a twelve-year-old in such ignorance, and fearing that he would die in such a state, he sat down beside him to teach him the mysteries and truths necessary for salvation [...] The priest left him,

¹ See the long introduction to these notes in OM2.

² « Ce qui nécessitait (sic) la hâte de l'œuvre : enfant malade au pied du Pila (sic), nécessité de moyen... Sort un instant chez le voisin, rentre mort, réflexion : que d'enfants (sic) hors de la voie du salut... si instruit sait se repentir, sait... ».

to minister to a sick person in an adjoining house. As he went out, he asked after the sick youth, to be told by his tearful parents that he had died a moment after the priest's departure. Then he felt an upsurge of joy at having been there so opportunely, but it was mingled with a shudder of dread at the danger run by the poor boy, whom he had perhaps just snatched from the gates of hell.

Marcellin would have then immediately spoken to Jean-Marie Granjon and invited him to participate in the foundation of a "Society of Brothers".

Bourdin and Brother Jean-Baptiste essentially agree on the sudden death of the child, and on Marcellin's feelings that led him to hasten his work. Brother Jean-Baptiste clearly placed the event at the end of 1816, indicating the child's age (12 years old), but did not mention a specific location. He spoke at length about the child's ignorance and Father Champagnat's effort to instruct him, while Father Bourdin merely refers to the event.

This raises a question: was Brother Jean-Baptiste aware of Father Bourdin's written memoirs, and did he adapt them in order to provide a detailed account? Without even studying the question, we can say this was unlikely: the memoirs were collected by Brother Eubert from Father Bourdin's bedroom in Chasselay after he died in 1883, but Brother Jean-Baptiste had published the *Life* in 1856³. It is not beyond possibility, however, that during his

investigation he may have asked Father Bourdin for information, at least orally. He may have therefore obtained Father Champagnat's personal account of this event. There was enough intimacy between both men to render this hypothesis plausible. We have a clue of this in the *Life* (Part 1, Chapter 19, p. 222), when it mentions that Marcellin held the foundation of the Fathers' Society as being more important than that of the Brothers, to which a Brother – who could have easily been Jean-Baptiste himself – replies:

"Do you know, Father, that if your preference for the Fathers were known, the Brothers would be jealous?"

3. WEAK TRADITION REGARDING THIS EVENT AMONG THE FIRST MARIST BROTHERS

The encounter between the child from "the foothills of Mt Pilat" and Marcellin was therefore brought belatedly to light by Brother Jean-Baptiste. The memoir of Brother Laurent, written in 1842 – at the time when Brother François encouraged the Brothers to share their writings about the Founder, when Brother Jean-Baptiste began his work – tell of a general situation but not a particular event⁴:

³ See OM4 p. 737-738, Introduction to Bourdin's memoirs. See also Avit: *Annals of the Institute*.

⁴ Given the faulty and archaic expression, and the loose punctuation of the manuscript, I have taken the liberty of introducing some corrections in both senses.

[1] In 1818, Monsieur Champagnat, a priest, who was then the curate in La Valla, was heartbroken to find the ignorance that reigned in the parish, especially among young people. He discovered some children⁵ between 10 and 12 years of age who didn't know why they were on earth, or even that there was a God. So he resolved to form a society of young men whom he instructed himself and formed in all the virtues, so that they could instruct the young ones, that is to say, the poor children of the countryside. And since he placed all his trust in God, he wanted no other funds than those of His Providence, which had never deceived him.

[2] He first bought a small house close to the presbytery. The first young man he brought there was very virtuous. My brother was the second and I was third; Couturier, or Brother Antoine, the fourth; then Brother Barthélemy and Reverend Brother François. There were six of us for a while.

Brother Jean-Baptiste used this text, since he mentions the child's age, and the children who did not know there was a God, an expression that means they had not been catechized⁶. It is therefore legitimate to ask whether Brother Jean-Baptiste transformed Brother Laurent's generic story into the account of a specific meeting in order to make it more concrete.

Furthermore, dating the encounter in 1816 seemed reasonable: it placed it between the statement of "we need Brothers" at Saint Irénée Seminary, and the foundation on January 2, 1817. Brother Laurent's story itself – which

first mentions the encounter with ignorant children (but not dying ones), and then the decision to assemble some followers – suggests such a timeline, and Brother Jean-Baptiste did not take Brother Laurent's date of 1818 to the letter, since it was obviously an approximation. However, given that Brother Laurent stated the massive religious ignorance of children as something Father Champagnat knew about, it would be very surprising that the Founder were already aware of such a fact in October 1816, after only two months of parish apostolate. Brother Laurent's narrative, therefore, raises doubts regarding the date of the encounter with the sick child; and in any case, he makes no mention of Les Palais although he had been schoolmaster in Le Bessat around 1819-20, and then in Tarentaise in 1822-23.

It is thus clear that in 1842 there was no tradition among the first Brothers about Marcellin's alleged ministering to a sick child in 1816, either at Les Palais or elsewhere.

4. BROTHER AVIT'S DOUBTS AND SILENCES

Brother Avit, who was always keen to record the early Brothers' traditions, including the adding of new details and

⁵ Sentence in correct French language: "Il trouva tant d'enfants ... qu'il résolut"

⁶ In community Annals of the time, I have found the same expression to indicate deep religious ignorance.

correcting any errors, recalls the year of 1817 as follows: “He worked on it (the foundation of the Brothers) upon his arrival in La Valla” (Annals, 1817, § 13). Then he mentions the meetings with Jean-Marie Granjon and Jean-Baptiste Audras, the purchase of a house, and their settling in on January the 2nd. He says nothing about a dying child.

Yet, in his “Notice to the Readers” – which serves as an introduction to the Annals of the Institute he began in 1884 – he states: “For these Annals, the author has used the writings of Reverend Father Bourdin, Reverend Brother François and Reverend Brother Jean-Baptiste.” Therefore, he knew both versions of the dying child story. But he expresses disappointment about Father Bourdin, whose memoirs had just been discovered:

He [Brother Avit himself] has only part of Father Bourdin's manuscript, since the other part was taken by the Marist Fathers after the death of the manuscript's author. This part contains a great number of notes but they are dateless.

He made the same remark about Brother Jean-Baptiste who “apparently intended to offer ‘a body of doctrine’ by writing the life of Reverend Father Champagnat, grouping the facts without worrying enough about their precise dates.”

Not being able to confirm the date of the encounter with the dying child

through his research work, and perhaps doubting its historicity, Brother Avit kept silence in order to avoid an open opposition to the official tradition. He did the same during Marcellin's beatification process: after offering historical corrections on several chapters of Father Champagnat's canonical biography, he remained silent about chapter IV, which described the foundation of the Institute, including article 43 concerning the encounter with the sick child⁷.

In his *Annals of the Houses*, the notice about Tarentaise – dated May 14, 1885 – mentions that Brother Laurent catechized in Le Bessat, taught in Tarentaise, and was in touch with a friend of Marcellin, the parish priest Préher, who was still in his position in 1842. There is not a single word about Marcellin's attending a child in Les Palais or elsewhere. In the *Annals of La Valla* – dated May 13, 1885 – Brother Avit does not mention any encounter with Granjon and Audras nor, indeed, with any sick child in the Pilat foothills.

5.A WELL-ESTABLISHED BUT UNDATED EVENT

We must therefore face the facts: the encounter with a child who died suddenly at the foot of Mt Pilat is strongly attested by two witnesses, although it remained confidential for a

⁷ Brother Agustin Carazo, Diocesan Inquiry, Rome 1991, p. 54.

long time. And when Brother Jean-Baptiste made it public in 1856, one may ask if he invented the date in order to achieve “a body of doctrine” – according to the reproach from Brother Avit, who saw a chronological difficulty about which he kept silent.

6. OFFICIAL TIMELINE AND ORIGIN OF THE MONTAGNE HYPOTHESIS

The historicity of an encounter at the end of 1816 between a sick child and Father Champagnat was taken for granted in 1856. But Brother Jean-Baptiste did not define the location nor the child’s identity. Brother Avit – who had a particularly sharp eye – seemed to accept the event without problem, given that, after all, it was considered to be rather anecdotal. For example, in his Circular dated February 2, 1909, Brother Stratonique, who knew the Marist sources very well, did not even mention the event:

Father Champagnat first had the idea of a teaching-brothers Institute when he was still a student at the seminary. When he became a priest and was sent as curate to Lavalla, he was struck by children’s ignorance. This convinced him about the need to implement his project as soon as possible. In 1817, after choosing two pious young people, he gathered them as a community in a poor house

of the parish [...]. This was like as a first element of the Constitutions⁸.

The Marist Chronology of 1917 (*Circulars*, Volume 13, p.438) does not refer to Marcellin’s meeting anyone in 1816 but merely indicates – like Brother Avit, who inspired the chronology – the beginning of his apostolate in La Valla.

This was not the case with the *Chronologies* of 1976 and 2010, which drew from later historical research that had dated the meetings with Jean-Marie Granjon on October 6 and 26, and the first contact with Jean-Baptiste Audras on November 2. After these reports, October 28 stands as the date when “Father Champagnat attended to the young Jean-Baptiste Montagne, 17 years old, on his deathbed, in the hamlet of Les Palais”. A place, a name, and a date are attributed to the meeting between Father Champagnat and the sick child. But they are, in fact, a fairly recent and fragile hypothesis, as will be shown below.

7. BROTHER JOSEPH-PHILIPPE AND THE DISCOVERY OF THE MONTAGNE CHILD

The Montagne child was mentioned for the first time in a short notice in the *Bulletin of the Institute*:

⁸ Brother Stratonique was reconstructing the history of the Institute’s Constitutions from the start.

A detail about our origins

Reverend Brother Joseph-Philippe, Vice-Postulator of our causes for beatification, sent us the following document specifying a point regarding our history that will be of interest for the entire Institute.

The sick child with whom Father Champagnat spent a long time in order to teach him the essentials of our holy religion and prepare him for death, was Jean-Baptiste Montagne. He lived in the hamlet of Les Palais, which now belongs to the parish of Le Bessat or Tarentaise. To get there from La Valla, you must go down into the valley, climb up on the side of Maisonnette, and then cross the plateau of La Barbanche. It is certainly not less than a two-hour walk. This fact that triggered, so to speak, the foundation of our Institute, took place on October 26, 1816" (N. 103, January 1936).

Brother Joseph-Philippe, a former Provincial of the Hermitage, became Vice-Postulator, and editor of the *Champagnat Review*⁹, which aimed at supporting the Founder's beatification cause and promoting the recruitment of vocations. It was he who found the name of Jean-Baptiste Montagne in the Civil Registry of La Valla – the only child who had died in the municipality during the year stated by Brother Jean-Baptiste.

Brother Joseph-Philippe's discovery found an enthusiastic ally in the parish

priest of Le Bessat, Father Dumas. The *Champagnat Review* issue of February 1936 (N. 19, p. 226) pointed out, in fact, that the later had published two articles in his parish bulletin about the origins of the Institute¹⁰ in December 1935 – "considering that his parish, having benefited from Venerable Champagnat's apostolate, either directly or through his followers, should observe the memory of the Marist Brothers' Founder". In the first article, entitled *Venerable Marcellin Champagnat – 1789-1840* he told his parishioners:

At the time of the foundation in 1817, Le Bessat was still dependent on La Valla, and Father Champagnat came often to our small village, which was then a hamlet, to teach catechism and specially to administer the sacraments, so our pathways must have been often sanctified by the passing of this holy priest, founder of an order.

At the end of 1935, Father Dumas did not yet know about Brother Joseph-Philippe's discovery, and recalled no particular tradition regarding Father Champagnat's interventions in Le Bessat. A second article in the same issue simply brings up the story of Brother Laurent as teacher in Le Bessat, according to Brother Jean-Baptiste's biography. In any case, he

⁹ *Champagnat Review* (Revue Champagnat) replaced the *Little Bulletin of the Servant of Mary*, official publication about the causes of beatification of the Marist Brothers' Institute (Petit bulletin du Serviteur de Marie, organe des causes de béatification de l'Institut des Frères Maristes). In August 1935, having reached its 14th year of circulation, the original name was replaced by that of *Champagnat Review* (Revue Champagnat).

¹⁰ This issue of the monthly Bulletin (4th year, N. 39) called "*Le Trait d'Union*" [literally "The Hyphen", although the French name is a play on words also meaning "The Trait of Unity" – translator's note] had twenty pages. It was found thanks to Brother Roger Charrier and Mrs. Tardy. It invited the parishioners to pray not only for Champagnat's beatification but also for Brother François', and it even provided the prayer texts for this purpose.

invited his parishioners to pray for the beatification of Father Champagnat and Brother François, and even provided the prayer resources for this purpose. In the end, he was actually a devotion promoter rather than someone who interpreted tradition.

As for Brother Joseph-Philippe, he published a long article in the *Champagnat Review* (N. 35-37, June-August 1937) under the title “Le Bessat – a historical fact”, which stated:

“On October 29, 1816, he was called to assist the young François Montagne, who was very sick in the hamlet of Les Palais, located in the mountains.

[...]

Thanks to research carried out in the Civil Registry of La Valla, and to the information collected in Le Bessat, we have clarified an interesting fact for the Marist Brothers' Institute and even for the people of the region (No. 35, pp. 486-488)”.

The article even includes a photo of the Montagne House, specifying that it was called the *Polish House*, and that it had been “recently purchased by the very Christian Fayolle family from Saint-Étienne.”

He was vague regarding “the information collected in Le Bessat”, while he recalled (N. 36, July 1937) that the memory of Champagnat remained alive there: “don’t we find his picture in most of the houses?” Was it, however, a deep and long-standing tradition? When Marcellin was declared Venerable in 1896, there was a thanksgiving triduum in La Valla, but no commemoration whatsoever in Le Bessat. In addition, the former Montagne

house bears a name that has nothing to do with the alleged event.

If Brother Joseph-Philippe found Jean-Baptiste Montagne’s death certificate in the Civil Registry of La Valla, it is strange that he did not transcribe it accurately, since he confused the date of his death with that of the certificate, and the child’s name he mentions (François) is actually his father’s:

On October 29, 1816, at ten o’clock in the morning, François Montagne (carpenter from Les Palais in the commune of La Valla, aged 57), and Jean-Baptiste Montagne (laborer at that place, aged 52) appear before me, Jean-Baptiste Berne [...], to declare that Jean-Baptiste Montagne, son of the same François Montagne and Clémence Porta, has died in their home yesterday at seven o’clock in the evening at the aforesaid place of Les Palais, at 17 years of age.

Brother Joseph-Philippe’s imprecision could have been caused by two difficulties: the deceased boy was not the age Brother Jean-Baptiste had stated; and his death was not recorded by the Parish Register of La Valla, since he was buried in Tarentaise by Father Préher, who acknowledged him as his parishioner, aged sixteen-and-a-half.

Therefore, it was an assertion with no real evidence, something which did not prevent the *Bulletin of the Institute* (N. 116, 1939) from presenting a long article entitled *The Institute During the Life of its Founder (1817-1840)* supporting the Montagne hypothesis, and changing the boy’s name and age:

The providential catechism lesson.

One winter evening, on October 29, 1816, the curate was called to assist a sick child,

François Montagne, in the distant hamlet of Les Bessat. It was a boy who was dying at 12 years of age. He had grown up, like other youngsters of the time, without any religious instruction.

8. INDIFFERENCE ON THE PART OF THE INSTITUTE

The stating a name and a place without serious documentation attracted little enthusiasm, even in the context of Marcellin's beatification. The *Bulletin of the Institute* (N. 160, October 1955) chronicled the pilgrimage of the Superiors and a large number of Provincials after the annual retreat in June 1955, following Father Champagnat's beatification, but did not mention Le Bessat and Les Palais among the Marist places at which they stopped:

Having left early in the morning by bus, they arrived, via Saint-Étienne, at the school of Marlhès, where they were graciously welcomed by the brothers and their pupils [...]. Before leaving, the pilgrims stopped at the Church [...]. After greeting the Parish Priest in the sacristy, the caravan stopped at Le Rosey [...]. Then, crossing Tarentaise and le Bessat, they reached the valley through a beautiful road.

After a stop at La Valla and the Hermitage, the pilgrimage concluded in Fourvière.

9. PERSISTENCE OF THE PARISH PRIEST OF LE BESSAT

Although the Superiors appeared indifferent, Father Dumas managed to attract their attention through a solemn triduum (BI N. 164, October 1956):

Father Dumas, parish priest of Le Bessat, near La Valla, is an enthusiastic admirer of Father Champagnat [...]. Does he not hold that the Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary was conceived in the territory of his parish? The extant house of the Montagne family – whose son was anointed by Father Champagnat sometime after his arrival in La Valla in the circumstances that we know – is part of the parish of Le Bessat. Proud of this indisputable fact, the parish priest decided to dedicate a triduum to him, but a triduum in his own and rather original way, or in any case, done a little differently from others. He obtained an indulgence to celebrate it in August 1956, at a time that could attract the many vacationers who come to spend the summer in the region. He managed to get an important relic for a magnificent reliquary he had made¹¹. For some time, medallions with the inscription of Le Bessat were sold. He wanted this feast to be an event for the parish and surrounding areas. And we must admit that he succeeded in every sense.

The *Bulletin of the Institute* (N. 166, April 1957) describes how the altar of a new chapel dedicated to Blessed Marcellin Champagnat in the Church of Le Bessat was consecrated on March 25 by Archbishop Emeritus Jean Delay – born in Saint-Chamond, former Auxiliary Bishop of Lyon, former Archbishop of

¹¹ This reliquary has an engraved ivory plate portraying the child, and Marcellin sitting next to him.

Marseille – with the participation of Reverend Brother Léonida, the General Council, several Brothers from the Mother House, the Brothers Provincial, delegates from a number of Provinces, priests from the diocese and surrounding parishes, all of whom were present to honor Father Champagnat.

10. THE INSTITUTE BECOMES INTERESTED

Father Dumas' initiative certainly bore fruit, since the *Bulletin of the Institute* (N. 169, January 1958) published an article about Le Bessat recalling the history of the Montagne discovery:

The hamlet of Les Palais and the house where François Montagne died – the young boy mentioned in the Life of Blessed Champagnat (1931 edition, p. 86) – are in this town [...]. Given this event, Father Dumas states, not without reason, that the Congregation of the Little Brothers of Mary was born in his parish.

By means of long and patient research, especially in the parish death register, Brother Philippe – former Provincial of the Hermitage and Vice-postulator of the Blessed Founder's cause – managed to identify the young man whose name

Brother Jean-Baptiste did not mention. In addition, the house in which young Montagne died has just been graciously offered to us by the owner, Mrs. Fayolle from Saint-Étienne, who is thus entitled to the entire Institute's gratitude. Father Dumas, parish priest of Le Bessat, volunteered to repair the building. This will be a further step on the path leading to the sources from which the Institute sprang; and the route we could call 'the Blessed Champagnat pilgrimage' will be completed.

The expected donation to the Congregation never took place¹², but the *Bulletin of the Institute* went on supporting Father Dumas' role, and kept making the same mistake about the child's first name, attributing its discovery in the parish register to Brother Joseph-Philippe, without specifying the parish in question.¹³

However, Les Palais was not yet included in the list of Marist places, even if it was beginning to attract more interest. This can be seen in the *Bulletin of the Institute* (N. 177, January 1960) published the story of an Italian Brother who visited the Marist holy places: Fourvière, Saint-Genis-Laval, The Hermitage, La Valla, and

"we could also see, in passing, the house where our Blessed Founder confessed the sick child, whose religious ignorance alarmed him and made him decide to begin his project without further delay."

¹² Was there a refusal on the part of the Superiors? The text suggests that the house was in bad conditions, and the Superiors had other projects in mind, such as the chapel of Le Rosey.

¹³ It is quite possible that a record of this burial at Tarentaise was discovered by Fr Dumas or Br Joseph-Philippe. Further investigation on this point could be pursued in the *Revue Champagnat* or the parish bulletin.

The *Bulletin of the Institute* (N. 193, 1963) commented on the renovation of our chapel in Manziana:

“It portrays, for example, our Blessed Father Founder offering to the Lord the dying child of Le Bessat he had just saved in extremis, and asking the Lord for help to implement the inspiration he had received in Fourvière.”

Thus, the idea that a fundamental event regarding the origins of the Institute had taken place in Le Bessat was taken for granted by the 1960s, and Father Dumas was the main promoter of something that was not a verified historical event.

11. THE DECISIVE INFLUENCE OF BROTHER GABRIEL MICHEL’S ARTICLE

It was Brother Gabriel Michel who attributed a decisive historical consistency to this matter (*Bulletin of the Institute*, N. 204, October 1966). He did not mention the discovery of Jean-Baptiste Montagne by Brother Joseph-Philippe and Father Dumas, but simply considered it as a given fact. His approach was influenced by the *Origines Maristes* – whose first three volumes had appeared in 1960, 1961 and 1965 – and he was eager to establish,



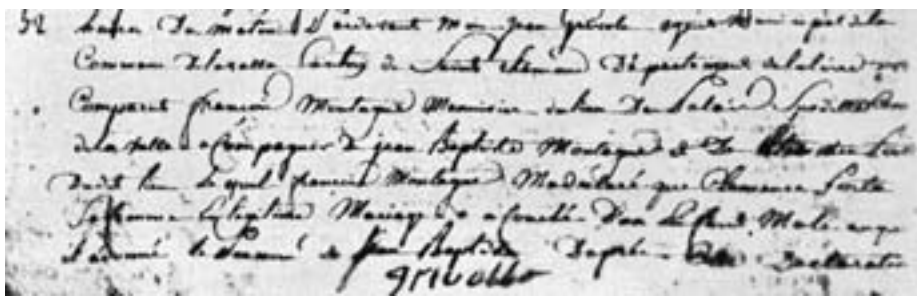
Reproduction of the verbal process of the J-B Montagne's death, signed by Berne

through supporting documents, the chronology of Father Champagnat's three decisive meetings with 1816 with Granjon, Audras, and Jean-Baptiste

Montagne. For the first time, the Institute could read Jean-Baptiste Montagne's birth and death certificates, and his funeral record:

On October 29, 1816, at ten o'clock in the morning, François Montagne (carpenter from Les Palais in the commune of La Valla, aged 57), and Jean-Baptiste Montagne (day-labourer of that place, aged 52) appear before me, Jean-Baptiste Berne (Mayor and Civil State Officer of the Commune of La Valla, Canton of Saint-Chamond, Department of the Loire), to declare that Jean-Baptiste Montagne, son of the same François Montagne and Clémence Porta, has died in their home yesterday at seven o'clock in the evening at the aforesaid place of Les Palais, at 17 years of age. According to their statement, and having presented the corpse, we have written this act that the aforementioned witnesses did not sign, being unable to do so as required.

Berne M.



Birth certificate of J-B Montagne, signed by Grivola

Given that no other deaths between Father Champagnat's arrival in La Valla and the end of 1816 could agree with the story, Brother Jean-

Baptiste's "12 year-old child" became a teenager between 16-and-a-half and 17 years old, as stated by the birth register:

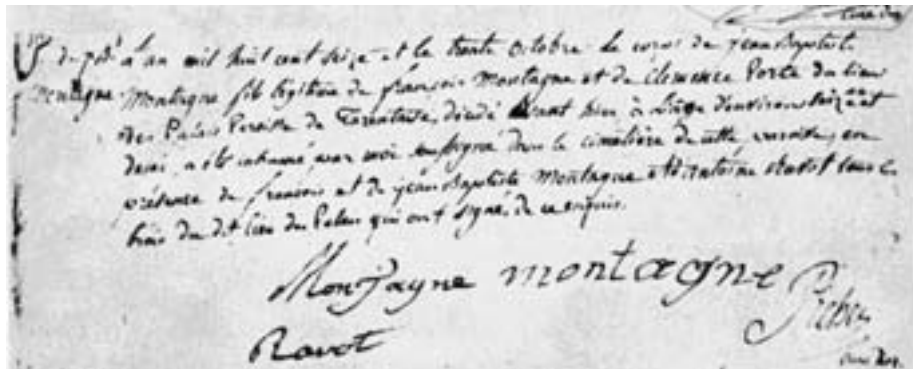
Today, Floréal the 20th, eighth year of the French Republic¹⁴, at ten o'clock in the morning, François Montagne (carpenter from Les Palais in the Municipality of La Valla), accompanied by Jean-Baptiste Montagne and Étienne Porta (from the same place), appear before me, Jean Grivola (Municipal Officer of La Valla, Canton of Saint-Chamond, Loire Department), to declare that Clémence Porta, his legitimate wife, had delivered a male child, to whom he gave the name of Jean-Baptiste.

Grivolla.

¹⁴ 10 May 1800

On October 30, 1816, the body of Jean-Baptiste Montagne (legitimate son of François Montagne and Clémence Porta from Les Palais, parish of Tarentaise), who died yesterday at the age of about sixteen-and-a-half, was buried by me, the undersigned, in the cemetery of this parish, in the presence of François and Jean-Baptiste Montagne, and Antoine Ravot, all three from the aforesaid place of Les Palais, who have signed as requested.

*Montagne. Montagne.
Ravot. Préher, serving priest.*



Verbal Process of the inhumation of J-B Montagne (Parish of Tarentaise)

Therefore, there is no doubt about the existence of Jean-Baptiste Montagne, born on May 10, 1800, and died at 16 years of age on October 28, 1816, declared dead by Mayor Berne at the Town Hall of La Valla on October 29, and buried on October 30 by Father Préher in Tarentaise. Brother Gabriel Michel logically deduced that he was the child anointed by Father Champagnat, mentioned by Bourdin's memories and by Brother Jean-Baptiste. After Brother Gabriel Michel's article, which considered Brother Jean-Baptiste's chronology accurate, the Montagne hypothesis became historical truth. And we know that, since then, the Institute has paid, belatedly but

powerfully, great attention to "the Montagne experience", which has become almost a founding myth.

12. FRAGILITY OF THE MONTAGNE HYPOTHESIS

However, several elements remain problematic. For instance, there is a curious contradiction – which went unnoticed by Brother Gabriel Michel – between the Civil Registry and the burial minutes, given that Jean-Baptiste Montagne's father and uncle did not know how to sign on the

29th, but signed with a clear handwriting the next day. This fact, which was not unusual at the time, signified resistance to the new revolutionary and official procedures. But the most problematic element is the contradiction with the Bourdin's memoirs, which mention a sick child "in the foothills of Mt Pilat". Two things: Montagne was not a child, and Les Palais is not in the Pilat foothills¹⁵.

To justify the age discrepancy, Brother Gabriel Michel reasonably argued that people at that time relied more on appearance than on actual age. But a difference of five years (from 12 to 17) is too much. And above all, given that children received first communion at the age of 13, an almost complete religious ignorance in a young man almost 17 – who could have not received the sacrament without being previously catechized – seems unlikely. By stating that the child was 12 years old (*Life*, p. 61), his religious ignorance became more plausible.

Regarding the place, the foothills of Mt Pilat strictly means the upper Gier Valley, while Les Palais is on the plateau between Le Bessat and Tarentaise. Marcellin knew the territory over which he had travelled for many years too well to use this expression loosely. Another delicate point: why did Father Champagnat at-

tend the young Montagne when it was Father Préher who buried him, declaring him a parishioner? Ultimately, the Montagne theory is all based on Brother Jean-Baptiste's chronology, but we have seen that he is the only one who states this date; the other sources are evasive or suggest a later timing. Brother Gabriel Michel clearly demonstrated the existence of the Montagne boy, but nothing else.

13. THE PARISH REGISTER OF TARENTOISE IN 1816-17

The parish of Le Bessat did not yet exist at that time, but this large hamlet, some distance from the village of La Valla, is very close to the parish of Tarentaise. As for Les Palais, although it was divided between the communes of Tarentaise and La Valla, it was actually in the suburbs of Tarentaise, so to speak, and almost the entire hamlet is located within this commune's territory¹⁶.

The Parish Register of Tarentaise in 1816 shows that Father Montchovel celebrated many baptisms and burials – but very few marriages – until March 6, 1816. He then fell ill. Father Richard, parish priest of Planfoy, de-

¹⁵ Brother Avit (*Annales of the Institute*, 1821, § 28) located Le Bessat "almost at the top of the Pilat Mountains".

¹⁶ A population census of La Valla in 1815 mentions Les Palais but does not indicate the names of any inhabitants there, as if the fact of belonging to the town was more theoretical than real.

clared him to be “indisposed”, and took over the Parish Register. Father’s Montchovel’s funeral on April 2, 1816, gave the priests of the region an opportunity to gather:

- Jean-Baptiste Rouchon,
parish priest of Valbenoîte
- Benoît Richard,
parish priest of Planfoy
- Benoît Rivory,
parish priest of Rochetaillée
- Claude Bonnet,
curate of Rochetaillée
- Jean-André Ducret,
parish priest of Graix
- Claude Peyrard,
parish priest of Jonzieux
- Jean Thomas, parish priest
of Saint-Romain-les-Atheux
- Jean-Baptiste Rebod,
parish priest of La Valla

This list indicates the territory to which the parish was sociologically connected: the villages along the road between Saint-Étienne and the Rhône Valley (Valbenoîte, Planfoy, Rochetaillée, and Graix), and others

on the same plateau that are further away. Only the presence of Rebod indicates a relationship with the Gier Valley: there was nobody from Saint-Chamond, Rive-de-Gier or Doizieu. Before the arrival of the new priest in Tarentaise, a baptism was celebrated on April 10 by Father Courbon, parish priest of Saint-Genest-Malifaux. Neither Father Rebod nor his curate, Father Arthaud, crossed the valley to conduct this ceremony. One cannot exclude a misunderstanding between the priests of Tarentaise and La Valla, given that Father Rebod had a difficult personality. But geography is the simplest explanation: going from La Valla to Tarentaise is much more difficult than arriving there along the road from Saint-Étienne or the plateau.

Father Préher, the new parish priest, arrived in April, had his appointment confirmed on May 12, and then offered regular services until August 28. He started signing the parish records again on September 26. In the interim, there was only one entry dated September 18 and signed by Marcellin Champagnat:

On September 18, 1816, the body of Joseph Degraix (married to Magdelaine Morel, property owner of Bessa, parish of Lavalla), who died the day before yesterday at about 34 years of age, was buried by me, the undersigned Curate of Lavalla, in the cemetery of Tarentaise, authorized by the relevant authorities, in the presence of Pierre Petitmathieu and Barthélemy Prudhomme from the locality of Bessa, illiterate.

Champagnat vic.

For the first time, a priest from La Valla was filling in for the parish priest of Tarentaise. And he did so thanks to an agreement between Father Préher and the parish priest of La Valla, Fa-

ther Rebod, as indicated by the formula “authorized by the relevant authorities”. Father Champagnat even included the minutes of the funeral in La Valla’s Parish Register:

On September 18, 1816, I, the undersigned, gave Christian burial to Joseph Degrai (a farmer who died yesterday in Le Bessac, parish of La Valla, at about 37 years of age¹⁷), in the presence of the undersigned Antoine Massardier and Jean-Antoine Rivat.

Massardier, Rivat, Champagnat, curate.

Father Préher was therefore absent during the month of September, probably participating in a retreat and dealing with the procedures regarding his appointment as parish priest; and Father Champagnat filled in for him, as it had been planned in advance. This service did not go on because Father Jean-Baptiste Seyve – who signed as “Sayve”, ordained priest together with Marcellin on July 22, 1816 – was appointed as curate in Tarentaise on October 1, 1816, and signed his first entry in the Parish Register on the 8th of that month. During the rest of the year, there were 16 baptisms and burials, either signed by the parish priest or his curate, including the burial of Jean-Baptiste Montagne, celebrated by Father Préher on October 30. Father Champagnat’s intervention in late October, motivated by the supposed absence of the parish priest and his curate, is not plausible.

14. AMBIGUOUS STATUS OF LE BESSAT

The principle that a commune’s territory (civil administrative unit) corresponds to that of a parish (religious entity) is not really applicable to the geographical area we are considering. I will show that this inconsistency applied to Le Bessac, which entirely belonged to the commune of La Valla.

On January 7, 1816, Father Montchovet buried Louise Driot “married to Guillaume Bonnet, cart driver of Le Bessac, parish of Tarentaise”. On January 29, he baptized Jean-Marie Dorel, the son of a laborer *in Le Bessac, parish of Lavalla*. There is no need to multiply the examples: when Montchovet and his successors in 1816-17 baptized or buried someone from Le Bessac, indicated either Tarentaise or La Valla as their parish. The survey I conducted in the Parish

¹⁷ The deceased was three years old!

Register from August 24, 1816, to the end of 1817 indicated 14 people living in “Le Bessa, parish of Tarentaise”, and nine others in “Le Bessa, parish of La Valla”, all of them buried in Tarentaise. It is true that the formula “authorized by the relevant authorities” – already used by Champagnat on September 18, 1816 – appears in all these entries since Father Préher’s arrival, but more systematically after March 1817. This meant that the parish priest of La Valla allowed the burial outside his churchyard. Incidentally, very few of the deceased from Le Bessat were included in the Parish Register of La Valla, although they were listed in the town’s Civil Registry.

One thing is thus clear: virtually the entire population in the large hamlet of Le Bessat considered itself as spiritually being part of Tarentaise, the closest village and cemetery, not to mention that both places were economically and sociologically served by the road linking Saint-Étienne and the Rhône Valley, and located on the same harsh-weathered plateau. They clearly communicated much better between themselves than with the deep valleys and hills of La Valla.

This dissociation between administrative and ecclesiastical territories was certainly deeply rooted, but the Revolution must have reinforced it, if we take into account the fact that the clandestine Vicar General of the refractory Church, Jacques Linsolas, suppressed parishes in 1794, and

created mission territories. Until 1802, the plateau was covered by a roving missionary based in Tarentaise, and La Valla fell under the mission of Saint-Chamond.

The return to a clearer canonical situation took place with the arrival of younger priests – such as Préher, Seyve and Champagnat – who actually regularized the state of affairs: before 1817, the people from Le Bessat were buried in Tarentaise without permission, while afterwards it was “authorized by the relevant authorities”. The curate of La Valla was obviously not upset by being freed from a burdensome territory, while the small parish of Tarentaise was happy to increase the number of its faithful.

Summing up, Le Bessat is between La Valla and Tarentaise. It was from Le Bessat that Brother Laurent initially based his missionary activity, before moving to Father Préher’s place. The creation of a commune and parish in Le Bessat around 1830 eventually solved these civil and religious problems. As for Father Champagnat, a good friend of Seyve and Préher, no other document than those I quoted, to my knowledge, indicates an intervention on his part in Le Bessat: he had enough to do around the hills of La Valla. It is true that Father Dumas stated in 1930-50 that his parish kept the memory of Father Champagnat, but we have seen that there was no celebration in Le Bessat when he was declared Venerable in 1896.

15. LES PALAIS IN THE HEART OF THE TARENTEISE PARISH

Although the region of Le Bessat was divided between the parishes of Tarentaise and La Valla, the hamlet of Les Palais was considered to be part of Tarentaise. For example, on February 2, 1816, Father Montchovel baptized the son of a certain Antoine Béraud, laborer from “Les Palais, parish of Tarentaise”. Likewise, Préher and Sayve always indicated “parish of Tarentaise” and never “parish of La Valla”. In this regard, the Montagne case is significant.

Between August 24, 1816, and the end of 1817, I found 28 references to “Les Palais, parish of Tarentaise” out of a total of 58 register entries. And, of course, the phrase “authorized by the relevant authorities” was not used. Interestingly enough, I found one case of a deceased person from Les Palais (July 9, 1817) registered as “from the village of Tarentaise”. Although the hamlet of Les Palais was not in the center of the parish, I have thus the impression that, according to the priests and the people, it was its natural extension. It was not an in-between area with an unclear allegiance like Le Bessat, but a place strongly claimed by a single parish. And there is no reason to think that Jean-Baptiste Montagne’s religious instruction was worse than in other places, considering that his

family was not illiterate. It is most unlikely that Father Champagnat, the evening of October 28, 1816, attended a boy who was completely ignorant about religion, especially at almost 17 years of age.

16. THE PARISH REGISTER OF LA VALLA

If the child Father Champagnat attended to was not Montagne, as it seems to be the case, were there other children from the parish territory of La Valla who died around this time?

To answer this question, I have made a list of children and young people, girls and boys, who were declared deceased by the commune of La Valla, and were also included in the Parish Register of La Valla or Tarentaise between 1817 and 1819. Since the ages mentioned are approximate, I chose a very broad range: from 6-7 (the age of reason) to 20 years, and I found a list of 26 names (10 girls and 16 boys)¹⁸. Father Préher celebrated seven funerals in Tarentaise; Father Rebod celebrated 14 in La Valla, and Father Champagnat celebrated five.

I then narrowed the range by considering only the children aged between 6/7 and 14/15, which resulted in a list of five girls and seven boys. If

¹⁸ I included the girls because Father Champagnat certainly also faced their ignorance in his apostolic work.

we exclude those who were buried in Tarentaise, and who were certainly not assisted by the priests of La Val-

la, the deceased boys aged between 6-7 and 14-15, buried in the parish of La Valla, were the following:

Burial date	Name	Hamlet	Age	Celebrant
31/05/1817	François Matricon	<i>Laval</i>	6-7	<i>Rebod</i>
04/02/1818	Jean-Baptiste Françon	<i>Les Fons</i>	10-11	<i>Rebod</i>
12/04/1818	Jean-Claude Farat	<i>Le Bourg</i>	12-13	<i>Rebod</i>
08/05/1819	Jean-Marie Ginot	<i>Rossillol</i>	9 ½-10	<i>Champagnat</i>
09/06/1819	Jean-Claude Farat	<i>La Farat or La Fourchina</i>	8	<i>Champagnat</i>

If we put aside Brother Jean-Baptiste’s dating of the event, the “sick child in the foothills of Mt Pilat” is probably in this list.

17. HYPOTHESIS ABOUT JEAN-CLAUDE FARAT FROM LA FOURCHINA OR FROM LA FARAT

Holding to the premise that Father Champagnat had a precise geography of the parish in mind when he mentioned the foothills of Mt Pilat, and was therefore talking about a dying boy in the upper eastern Gier Valley, we are entitled to screen the list further. The hamlet of Laval (François Matricon) is in the upper Ban Valley, and Rossillol (Jean-Marie Ginot) is at its bottom, in the western part of the municipality. Le Bourg, perched between the Gier Valley and the Ban Val-

ley (the first Jean-Claude Farat), does not match the criteria, and neither does Les Fons (Jean-Baptiste Françon), which is at the center of the region. Therefore, taking Father Champagnat’s geographical indications seriously, there is only one place left: La Farat (now called La Fare) or the neighboring La Fourchina, two of the high-altitude hamlets in the Gier Valley. The expression “in the foothills of Mt Pilat” could not be truer anywhere else. This area is at the periphery of the parish, and was a place of great economic and cultural poverty that partly subsisted by exploiting the forest timber. The existence of a child who did not know the catechism would not be surprising in such a place. Perhaps this is why Father Champagnat appointed a secular school master at the end of 1818 a little further down in the same valley, probably in the hamlet of Sardier (*Annals of the Institute*, 2010 p. 65).

18. INFORMATION ABOUT JEAN-CLAUDE FARAT IN THE CIVIL AND PARISH REGISTRIES

The Civil Registry of La Valla reports the birth of Jean-Claude Fara:

N. 71. Jean-Claude Fara from La Fara (in the margin).

On November 12, 1808, at seven o'clock in the evening, Antoine Fara (aged 35, farmer and resident of La Fara, commune of La Valla) appeared before me, Joseph Matricon (Mayor and Civil Registry Officer in the commune of La Valla, canton of Saint-Chamond, district of Saint-Étienne, department of La Loire), to present a male child born of him and Claudine Ferriol, his wife, today at five o'clock in the morning in his home at La Fara, whom he wishes to call Jean-Claude. These presentations and statements took place in the presence of François Chappard, aged 45, and Jean-Marie Fara, aged 32, who are both laborers and reside in Lavalla. After reading the present minutes, the declaration was done, with the aforesaid Antoine Fara, father of the child, being unable to sign as requested and demanded.

Matricon, Mayor.

The Civil Registry also declared his death in 1819:

N. 90. Death of Jean-Claude Fara from La Farat (on the margin).

On June 9, 1819, Antoine Farat, aged 60, and Damien Chapard, aged 40 (who are both farmers and reside in La Farat, commune of Lavalla), appeared before me, Jean-Baptiste Berne (Mayor and Civil Registry Officer in the commune of La Valla, canton of Saint-Chamond, district of Saint-Étienne, department of La Loire), to declare that his son Jean-Claude, born of him and his wife Claudine Ferriol, had died today at one o'clock in the morning, in their home at the aforesaid place of La Farat, at 8 years of age. After reading the present minutes, he declared he was unable to sign as requested.

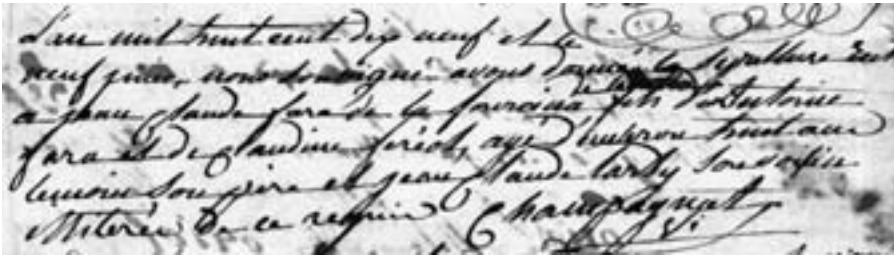
Berne.

The Parish Register of La Valla was more succinct:

Burial.

On June 9, 1819, I, the undersigned, gave ecclesiastical burial to Jean-Claude Fara from La Fourchina de la Valla, son of Antoine Fara and Claudine Feréol, of about eight years of age. Witnesses: his father and Jean-Claude Tardy his neighbor. Illiterate regarding this requirement.

Champagnat, curate.



Act of sepulture of Jean Claude Fara in La Valla, signed by Champagnat.

19. CONVERGING AND DIVERGING DOCUMENTS

Therefore, Jean-Claude Fara was born on November 12, 1808, and died on June 9, 1819, at the age of 10 years and almost 7 months, and not aged 8, as indicated by the Civil Registry and the burial record written by Father Champagnat. They both probably relied on the physical appearance of the dead boy, and on the parents' statement. We can also see this "flexibility" regarding people's age in the case of the father, Antoine Farat, who was registered as aged 35 in 1808, and 60 in 1819. According to the

Civil Registry, the family lived in La Fara, while according to Champagnat, they lived in the neighboring hamlet of La Fourchina. This nuance is more important than it seems because, by distinguishing two hamlets so close to each other, Champagnat proved he had a precise knowledge of the family's place of residence.

In addition, the chronology poses serious problems. The child would have died on June 9 at one in the morning; the death and the funeral would have taken place on the same day. In general, there was a distance of one or two days between death and burial, as we can see in the case of another child:

On May 8, 1819, I, the undersigned, gave Christian burial to Jean-Marie Ginot from Rossillol, parish of La Valla, who died yesterday at about ten years of age...

Champagnat

The day and time of the child's death were therefore wrong or approximate for reasons we do not

know¹⁹. And Father Champagnat avoids endorsing a clear error by not specifying the death date in the fu-

¹⁹ Most likely, the child would have died two days before the death registration, which was actually done the same day of the funeral either out of neglect or due to communication difficulties.

neral record. The fact that he celebrated the funeral also confirms that he knew the family's situation.

A census carried out in 1815²⁰, which covered most of the commune's hamlets, confirms Father Champagnat's minutes, since it located Antoine Fara and his wife in the tiny hamlet of La Fourchina (4 houses), and not at La Fara (28 houses). Antoine Fara was classified as "ploughman", that is, a well-off farmer. He even had two servants. In 1815, he had five boys and three girls.

In his memoirs about the events that took place in La Valla during the Revolution, Jean-Claude Barge mentions that the town was invaded by the French Army dragoons in October 1799 as a result of the resistance to military service. "Antoine Farat, known as Carriliet"²¹, was forced to accommodate two dragoons "because of his brother-in-law Jacquier-Chardon", who certainly had evaded the conscription. Barge never refers to La Fourchina, which he apparently confuses with La Fara. These vexations were not surprising in such remote locations, which were a refuge for deserters and allowed a shameless looting of the forest timber. In 1819, the draft evading was over but the looting of the forest still brought about much unrest and violence, which made people mistrust the civil authorities.

20. THE DATE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE NAME IN THIS HYPOTHESIS

Let us summarize the essential elements of our discussion. First of all, we cannot question that Father Champagnat visited a sick child in the Pilat foothills, an encounter which inspired him in the foundation of the Marist Brothers. On the other hand, the date of this meeting given by Brother Jean-Baptiste does not seem to be accurate. Consistent with Bourdin's memoirs, I believe it took place much later, that is, in 1819. And Jean-Claude Fara seems to be a good candidate to replace Jean-Baptiste Montagne: he was a 10-year-old boy, and the contact between the Fara family and Father Champagnat is certain. Their home was in the Pilat foothills, in a rather remote area where religious ignorance would not be surprising. However, nothing is explicitly said about the exact circumstances of the boy's death and Marcellin's intervention. Moreover, the heart of the Fara hypothesis is not so much the identity of the child but the date of his death because, if we accept that the encounter that resulted in the foundation of the Brothers did not take place in 1816 but in 1819, we need to reinterpret the story of the early years in La Valla.

²⁰ Town Archives of La Valla-en-Gier.

²¹ Many people bore the surname of Fara in La Valla, so they were distinguished by a nickname.

21. INITIALLY JUST A PIOUS ASSOCIATION WITHOUT A PRECISE LABEL (1817-1819)

Father Bourdin's memoirs began with a crucial assertion: "In Lavalla – branch that Father Champagnat had long planned, which was then entrusted to him in the major seminary – it started in 1817". Brother Jean-Baptiste said the same thing in his own way: "We need Brothers..." And he logically assumed that Marcellin had wanted to found the Marist Brothers as such right from the beginning.

But Marcellin's strategy was more prudent and spiritual: his first step was to create a community of lay assistants whom he prepared to carry out a parish apostolate. At the end of his memoirs (§28), Father Bourdin had a significant word to say in this regard: "Since the times of Father Bochard, he had thought about starting a small oratory, and being fully dedicated to it". The word "oratory" should not be taken in the French sense of indicating a physical place of prayer, but in the Italian sense of "apostolic center for young people" along the lines of the model that St Philip Neri developed in Rome during the sixteenth century.

At the beginning of his memoirs, referring to Father Champagnat's fraught relationship with the parish priest, Father Bourdin stated: "Father Champagnat does not tell him everything; he wants to try some things to

pursue his mission". During the difficult period with Father Bochard, probably in 1819, the memoirs put these words on Champagnat's lips: "My God, make it crumble if it is not yours" (§17). Brother Jean-Baptiste himself (*Life*, Part I, Chapter 6, 1989 edition, p.60) makes him use similar words: "My God, take away this thought from me (of founding the Brothers) if it is not conducive to your glory and the salvation of souls". There is clear additional evidence indicating a first stage of the community, from January 1817 to the end of 1819, showing that Marcellin hesitated about the kind of project he had founded, and asked himself whether it really expressed the will of God.

It is also likely that before the end of 1819 the Brothers were not familiar with the Marist Pledge of 1816. For example, the sentences that were painted in Father Champagnat's room around 1818 had no explicit Marist character. In addition, from early on the Brothers considered that their foundation to have taken place at La Valla in 1817, and not at Fourvière in 1816. Therefore, when did the Marist Brothers get to know the Marist Pledge of July 23, 1816, which was written in Latin? In 1856, Brother Jean-Baptiste summarized it very briefly, making several mistakes and without indicating the date:

In one such meeting,
it was agreed to go together on pilgrimage
to Fourvière and to lay their plans
at the feet of Mary.

The young seminarians,
headed by Father Cholleton²²,
went up to Mary's shrine,
entrusted their holy endeavors
to her maternal heart,
and begged her to bless the project,
if it led to the glory of her divine Son.

The text of the promise made by the Brothers in 1826 (OM1/168) certainly reflects the original pledge. However, the Brothers did not commit yet to “the *petite association* of the Little Brothers of Mary” (Life, Part I, Chapter 15, 1989 edition, p.157) as the text reported by Brother Jean-Baptiste states, but to “the pious association of those who consecrate themselves, under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for the Christian education of rural children”.

We must therefore admit, hypothetically, that from 1817 to the end of 1819, during almost three years, the Brothers whom Father Champagnat had gathered were not explicitly Marist Brothers. They probably wore a black habit – the same that Inspector Guillard still saw in 1822 in Bourg-Argental (OM1/75, § 3) – and it is not certain that they called themselves “Brothers of Mary” before 1819. They remained largely autonomous in relation to Father Champagnat, who was their spiritual director and formator. And in Le Bessat, Brother Laurent was almost fully independent.

22. A PASTORAL MODEL THAT IMITATED THE ‘FRIENDS OF THE CORD’?

To understand Father Champagnat's approach well, we must remember that the term “Brother” had different meanings at the time. A Brother could be a teacher, married or not, or a hospital employee... In fact, this word indicated a man who was dedicated to any religious or charitable activity. While it is clear that Marcellin intended to found the Marist Brothers since he was in the seminary, he first implemented his project within a parish setting, trying to form an association of catechist brothers with a Marist spirit but without giving them the “Marist” title.

Father Pousset's memoirs²³ can help us understand this approach. Indeed, he mentions that he got to know three associations in Saint Irénée Seminary: the *Friends of the Cord* (headed by Father Mioland); the *Followers of the Cross of Jesus* (disciples of Father Bochard), and the *Mariistes*. He was certainly not the only one who participated in more than one of these fervent *petites sociétés*, whose members intended to become deeply apostolic priests. In their resolutions, the *Friends of the Cord* contemplated that, once they became curates, they would gather young people under different pretexts

²² Brother Jean-Baptiste exaggerated the role of Cholleton, and they were not seminarians.

²³ Archives of the Holy Family Sisters.

in order to secretly form them for “the exercise of apostolic zeal”. Whether Champagnat was influenced by the *Friends of the Cord* or not, it is clear that he adopted their strategy as a first step, certainly without highlighting the Marist project as such.

23. THE RETREAT OF 1819: CLEAR REVELATION OF THE MARIST PROJECT

In 1819, Father Champagnat realized that his work was having unexpected spiritual and apostolic results, but also that his Brothers needed a firmer structure. The association was full of apostolic zeal but functioning in a rather anarchic way. And he found the answer in his encounter with the sick child. He urgently needed Brothers to prepare children for their first communion and eventually for a premature death: “How many children go astray from the way of salvation... If they get instruction, they will be able to repent...” (§ 6). For him, organizing the Brothers as a Marist religious community of teachers became “the means to address a need” (Bourdin’s memoirs, § 6). He interpreted the event as a manifestation of God’s will inviting him to give a firm Marist identity to his disciples. Brother Jean-Baptiste, concerned about continuity and unconcerned about chronology, mingled both stages of the foundation in a single chapter of his biography, using an innocuous formula to indicate the transition from one to the other:

Seeing his subjects increase, Father Champagnat thought he should give them a more organized life, conducive to living in community (Part I, Chapter 6).

This statement about the large number of subjects seems surprising because history registered the names of only six Brothers at the time. But some members of the lay association, whose boundaries were rather blurred, declined joining a more demanding structure. *The Life* mentions elsewhere that Brother Louis hesitated to make formal promises. There was also the case of teacher Maisonneuve, mentioned in *The Life*, who was sent away because of his worldly lifestyle. The new requirements were indeed not easy, and Brothers Jean-Baptiste and Avit described them pretty much in the same way: adopting the blue habit to explicitly indicate that they belonged to Mary; Father Champagnat coming to live with the Brothers; implementing a set of religious-house rules; and training in the FSC teaching method (Brothers of the Christian Schools).

In his first retreat notebook (N. 302), Brother François reveals the atmosphere of the retreat they had in late 1819. It took place in the Brothers’ chapel, which would soon become the Superior’s room:

[1] In the name of the Father and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit, amen.
O very Holy Trinity (Saint Francis Xavier)!
All to the greater glory of God
and the honor of the august Mary.

1st retreat of 1819 (Father Champagnat)

1. I will be mindful of the presence of God... while praying, teaching, walking, taking a break, and eating, and will always act with holy modesty for the glory of God, the honor of Mary, and the good of religion.
2. I will teach children respect, love, obedience to their parents and superiors, and especially prayer and the catechism.

[2] I will always follow the example of Jesus, Mary and the Saints (1820). I shall then teach by following the example of Jesus my master and my model.

He was more explicit in his Circular of July 2, 1855:

Our pious Founder, after acquiring the modest house that served as a cradle to the Institute in the parish of Lavalla, renovated a small room of this house with his own hands to turn it into the chapel of the nascent community. There, at the feet of Mary, he often brought the first Brothers together to pray and to form them in the practice of religious life.

And certainly alluding to an exhortation from this inaugural retreat, Brother François added:

One day, in the middle of a talk about the purpose of the Institute and the ways to achieve this goal through the faithful observance of the Rules, giving way to the inspirations of the Spirit of God who was in him, he exclaimed: "When will we have the joy of having Jesus Christ among us, of wearing the religious habit, and having a chapel to conduct our ceremonies? When will we see our Congregation properly established, with a well-organized novitiate and well-established Rules? Courage, my dear Brothers – he added – because all this will happen;

and the day when we will have a religious habit, a chapel, a novitiate, and Rules to direct us in every detail of our life is not far away'.

If we cannot not sure whether Father Champagnat revealed the Marist project to his disciples in 1817, we know he had done so by 1819, since Brother François began his notebook with the same motto as the Marist pledge. Regarding the belatedly reported exhortation, it stated a clear project that was actually carried out at the Hermitage. And that was when they probably started bearing the name of "Brothers of Mary".

In my opinion, there is a cause-and-effect relationship between Marcellin's encounter with a dying child, probably Jean-Claude Fara, and the transformation of his project into a branch of Brothers within the Society of Mary.

24.A DIFFICULT MUTATION

Did the brothers willingly accept the changes that Marcellin decided to implement?

In fact, they were surprised by the "need to hasten the project", which required from them a level of trust in Father Champagnat that was very difficult to live. In 1822, Jean-Marie Granjon tried to enter the Trappist Monastery of Aiguebelle, and eventually left the community; Brother Laurent himself found it difficult to

adapt to a more binding lifestyle, and Brother Louis appeared reluctant.

An undetermined number of disciples probably did not go on, such as teacher Maisonneuve. And having become more demanding than before, the project struggled to recruit new members.

CONCLUSION

Moving the encounter with the child to the foothills of Mt Pilat, and from 1816 to 1819, therefore, enables us to see the foundation of the Marist Brothers in two stages: an initial parish-based association of young people, whom Marcellin Champagnat formed in catechesis, apostolic spirit, and ascetic living, only implicitly following the spirit of the Fourvière pledge. He did

not come immediately to the identity of this project, and expected that God would clearly manifest his will. He believed he had found a clear sign of such will in his encounter with a dying child “in the foothills of Mt Pilat”, probably in 1819²⁴. Thereafter, establishing a community of catechist/teaching Brothers seemed to him “the means to address a need”, and he acted as a charismatic leader by inviting his disciples, during their first retreat in late 1819, to enter a new stage. That is when he explicitly revealed the Marist project, and invited them to consider themselves as a religious order in the process of foundation. By coming to live with them, he assumed the role of Superior. A significant number of disciples followed him in this project, but not without reluctance and ambivalence. They would only overcome the crisis with the arrival of the postulants from the Haute-Loire in 1822.

²⁴ This does not exclude other signs, such as his conversation with Brother Laurent as they climbed up to Le Bessat.

SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE “PROVINCE” OF CHILE

Arrival of the Marist Brothers at the beginning of the 20th century



**Julio Gajardo
Vásquez**

1. EDUCATION IN CHILE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY

a. Catholic education in Chile before the Marist Brothers’ arrival

At least until the 1880s, the Church in Chile left Catholic primary and secondary education in the hands of religious congregations which, although few in number, had significant social influence. Such was the case in Santiago with St Ignatius College run by the Jesuits and Sacred Hearts College run by the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts (Picpus Fathers). Likewise, the Church had a number of primary schools in the capital city that were run by the Society of Saint Thomas Aquinas, and other schools scattered around the country supported by private individuals or by other Congregations dedicated to education. The schools were rather dispersed and autonomous. It was impossible to speak of a Catholic schools’ network or a coordinated educational project of the Church.

Regarding management, only the Saint Thomas Aquinas Society in Santiago had a basic organization with a central administration that aimed at uniformity for the pedagogical work of schools. The rest of religious Congregations which ran schools across the country acted more independently, suited to local social situations. They were less subordinated to the hierarchy concerning educational issues probably due to the fact that the Congregations’ pedagogical experience exceeded the diocesan clergy’s limited experience in this area.

In the last decades of the century, however, there was a renewed ecclesial vitality, which we must understand within a broader political and socioeconomic context. The main factors were the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) – which dealt with a number of principles relating to the relationship between the Church and the world, and the right attitude towards modernity – and the growing social crisis brought about by cri-

tiques of capitalism. In that context, the guidelines drawn by the Council were based on the social renewal that Pope Leo XIII had in mind, and which were strongly pursued in the Latin American Church. The guiding principles were the Christianization of culture, the “social question”, and dialogue with the modern world¹. Although in the case of Chile, the nature of this process has not yet been studied in detail, we can say that the specific initiatives undertaken by the episcopate and the laity of the time clearly indicate that the Pontiff’s call resonated with the national flock. The creation of the Catholic University in 1888 and the Christian Center in 1894 at least suggests that the role of the Church regarding primary education became much more active and tended to institutionalize the project of the Catholic schooling on solid foundations. At the same time, the Diocesan Synod held in Santiago in 1895 stated the obligation of parents, at least in principle, to enroll their children in schools in which “there is no danger of perversion regarding faith or morality”, referring to mixed schools and non-confessional schools ran by the state or private entities².

All these specific initiatives, although they were only medium-term,

found new momentum after the episcopal message of the Latin American Plenary Council held in Rome in 1899, which eloquently expressed the inability of modern families to ensure their children’s Christian education³: devotional practices at home were no longer able to do so, since they were gradually fading out due to declining devotion of parents and the weakening of family life. This “deviation” was caused by the new work-conditions within medium and large scale industries, which shaped the modern labor system to be governed by strict schedules which left little time for the parents to take care of their children. Given these circumstances, traditional households that – theoretically – had guaranteed the Christian education of children could not go on carrying out that role, and schools thus needed to take it over. The Latin American Bishops and Archbishops who met with the Pope in Rome demanded that their Local Churches implement Catholic education in public schools, create training colleges for Catholic teachers and, above all, institutionalize Catholic schooling.

In Chile, this message was channeled through a pastoral letter that Archbishop Mariano Casanova signed in December 1900. It stated the reso-

¹ E. Luque Alcaide, “La restauración de la vida católica en América Latina en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX”, in *Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia*, 12, 2003, Instituto de Historia de la Iglesia de la Universidad de Navarra, España, p. 71-90. P. 76

² *Sinodo diocesano de Santiago de Chile*, Santiago. Printing and binding Roma, 1896, pages 359-360.

³ *Actas y Decretos del Concilio Plenario de América Latina celebrado en Roma el Año del Señor de MDCCCXCIX*, Vaticano, edic. fascimiliar y vaticana, 1999; Título IX, *De la educación católica de la juventud*.

lution that each parish should establish a Catholic school, “where children can receive Christian instruction, formation regarding the moral Catholic principles, and an essentially practical education enabling them to earn an honest living, according to their position and the social environment in which they live; in short, an education helping them become citizens who are aware of their rights, who know how to fulfill their duties at all times”⁴.

A year after the publication of this pastoral letter, 82 schools had been established and five thousand students already enrolled in them. Likewise, the opening of the first *Teacher Training School of the Archdiocese* had been planned with the aim of “forming preceptors that may be able to direct Catholic education centers – elementary, secondary and higher secondary, besides business vocational training programs – and of helping parish priests in the ongoing education courses they will establish for their former students”⁵. Five years after introducing these reforms, there were 372 private schools, most of which were paid for by the Archdiocese of Santiago and the provincial bishops, and run by convents and congregations, with an enrollment of 38,165 students. Although by 1906 only around 14% of the primary schools in Chile were Catholic, the

fact remains that the Church was beginning to sketch out an educational project that eventually included secondary schools as one of its pillars. The Christian Center was to be essential in this new stage.

b. Importance of the Christian Center

Founded in 1894, this new Catholic lay society – which was as deeply attached to the hierarchy as its counterpart, the *Saint Thomas Aquinas Association of Schools* – aimed to ensure the preservation of the Catholic faith by instructing young people. However, unlike the *Association of Schools*, the *Christian Center* was intended as a national level organization operating through a network of parish-level councils that linked local communities with its board of directors based in Santiago⁶. Although the operational orbit of the new Society was not definitively specified, it was implicitly intended to bring together Catholic lay people across the Republic, especially those who were better off and could help fund popular education. It is important to highlight this point, as it influenced the places where the first Marist communities were established. It should also be noted that, although it should have spread throughout the country – at least in principle – the immediate action of the *Christian Cen-*

⁴ *Circular sobre fundación de escuelas parroquiales*, en Boletín Eclesiástico, Tomo XV, 1901 – 1903, pp. 5-7.

⁵ *Boletín Eclesiástico*, Tomo XV, 1901 – 1903, p. 28.

⁶ Archive of the Arzobispado de Santiago from Chile (AASCh), Fondo Gobierno, leg. 48, vol. 93.

ter did not go beyond the Archdiocese of Santiago, which in 1894 extended from Aconcagua to Talca.

Across this geographical region, the *Christian Center* undertook a wide range of activities between 1894 and 1897: establishing and funding of schools and educational boards, legal aid to the poor, assistance to laborers through Catholic unions, and the establishment of cooperatives and literary academies⁷. All this effort took place within a Christian social-action framework aimed at promoting popular education which, as we have seen, gained momentum during the last decade of the century. Poor people were their target population, working-class families in particular, since they were the most vulnerable from both the moral and social perspectives. In 1905, they were commissioned to educate Catholic teachers through the Archdiocese's teachers college (*Escuela Normal del Arzobispado*). They gave special attention to this task, since a true Christian instruction of children relied on the training of teachers.

Given the kind of work it was developing, the Center logically evolved into the official Catholic body overseeing all educational matters. In 1906, it became the *Diocesan Council for Primary Education*, which kept the Archbishop updated about the

schools' development within the Archdiocese.⁸ Over time, this work expanded and eventually included the supervision of secondary education, a fact that was especially interesting for Marist history in Chile, since it coincided with the successful efforts to bring the Brothers to the country, as we shall see later.

Around 1909, perhaps before, the Board of the Christian Center began to work on the development of secondary education, especially in the provinces. What they intended, more precisely, was to strengthen Catholic schools vis-à-vis the competing government secondary schools. There are no documentary sources to define precisely when secondary education became a battlefield between the Church and secular educators, but the truth is that a number of government secondary schools were established from 1880 and eventually – as the Christian Center's board of directors acknowledged – created a “disconsolate disproportion” in relation to Catholic secondary education. Public high schools for boys or girls had 17,268 students, while Catholic schools had 9,613 students nationwide. The disproportion was equal or higher for professional or technical secondary education.

The main reason that moved the Archdiocese to strengthen its presence in secondary education was as

⁷ The Center in its 50th year 1894-1944, Santiago, s/e, 1947, en BNSCh.

⁸ AASCh, Gobierno, 48, 93.

old as the existence of the secondary school itself: the ruling class, that is, the people who would become the country's political leaders in the future, was formed in secondary schools. With the advent of the new century and the emergence of new social actors, not only economically privileged sectors of society had access to secondary education but also the middle class – a segment of the population that had no political or economic influence at the beginning of the twentieth century but did have enough resources to claim education for their children from the state and private institutions, an education that provided not only the basic notions to undertake an occupation or trade but a profession as such, or at least a high school diploma. The Church probably realized that the middle class would eventually become an influential sector of society, but this assertion is hypothetical for the time being, although Archbishop González Eyzaguirre's comment about a school in Los Andes – which was “for the middle class, destined to compete with the local public high school” – suggests that statement.⁹

Therefore, the development of secondary education required investing in new apostolic personnel who could take care of the schools. The State provided its high schools

with teachers who were either trained at the Pedagogical Institute or professionals from the University of Chile. The Church did not have anything similar. Catholic schools' personnel came from the teachers college of the Archdiocese (1904) and Saint Teresa teachers college (*La Escuela Normal Santa Teresa*; 1907), and priests with seminary training. Catholic schools were staffed by religious when they were run by a Congregation, and by religious and lay people when the schools were directed by a private owner. But staff were always scarce. Even public schools were short of priests to teach religion. The shortage of personnel to manage Catholic schools starkly contrasted with the magnitude of the services needed. There were 305 Catholic education centers in 1910: 244 primary schools, 52 secondary schools, a University, and eight seminaries.¹⁰

Regarding secondary education, the 52 schools were scattered along the country:

N.	Province	Schools
1	Coquimbo	1
2	Aconcagua	2
3	Valparaíso	6
4	Santiago	22
5	Colchagua	2

⁹ “Carta de J. Maubon a Monseñor José Ignacio González Eyzaguirre”, without date. Archivo Provincial Asuncionista, Santiago de Chile, mentioned in R. León, *Historia del Instituto Chacabuco de los Hermanos Maristas*, Los Andes, s/e, 2011, p. 33.

¹⁰ *Anuario Estadístico de la República de Chile, Santiago, 1910, p. 345.*

6	Curicó	2
7	Talca	2
8	Linares	1
9	Ñuble	1
10	Concepción	3
11	Malleco	1
12	Cautín	2
13	Valdivia	2
14	Llanquihue	2
15	Magallanes	2

The concentration of schools in Santiago explains, in part, why the Marist Brothers did not found any teaching communities or schools there before 1929, when they opened the *Instituto Alonso de Ercilla*.

2. CONTACTS AND EFFORTS TO BRING THE MARISTS TO CHILE

a. Early efforts

The first attempt to bring the Marist Brothers to our country took place in 1898. The story of this speaks about the needs of the Chilean Church at that time. It all started with a letter dated April 22, 1898, from Brother Pierre d'Alcantara, a teacher in the Scholasticate in Beaucamps, Northern France, to Brother Théo-

phane, the Superior General of the Marist Brothers. Brother Pierre asked the Superior General if there was any chance that the Congregation could send Marist Brothers to Chile. The letter had been motivated by a request from an elderly parish priest of a non-specified place in Chile to Brother Pierre's brother, who was a missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer Congregation in the country. The priest was eager to find a congregation that could send religious to help him with his parish school.¹¹

"The Chilean issue", as Brother Pierre called it, did not go beyond this letter. However, the priest's curious request clearly reflected the Chilean Church's need for apostolic personnel to address its educational demands. We do not know if the Superior General answered Brother Pierre's letter but the concern had been raised and the field of apostolate was ready.

Four years later, a new request for Brothers followed more formal procedures. In 1901, Brother Dositheus, Master of Juniors in Lacabane, France, wrote to the Superior General letting him know about the Assumptionist Fathers' interest in bringing the Marist Brothers to Chile, a country that "like Brazil, needs good exemplars and good teaching".¹² The letter was

¹¹ "Carta de F. Pierre d'Alcantara al Hno. Théophane", Beaucamps, 22 April 1898. Transcribed by L. Rubio, *Historia de los Hermanos Maristas de la Enseñanza en Chile (1898-1911)*, *Memoria para optar al título de profesor de Religión*, Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Valparaíso, 1988, pp. 85- 87.

¹² About the Assumptionists in Chile see F. Aliaga, *Religiosos Asuncionistas, 100 años al servicio de la Iglesia en Chile*, Santiago, Congregación de Agustinos de la Asunción, 1990.

sent from *Pensionnat de St-Michel* in Blanquefort, where days earlier Brother Dositheus had met Father Thomas Darbois, Provincial of the Augustinians of the Assumption in Chile.

Father Darbois gave great importance to the matter, and even volunteered to act as mediator between the Marist Brothers and the Chilean Bishops in case the project was approved. The Assumptionists understood Chile's apostolic field and the needs of the local Church very well, and this led to their advocating for the invitation to the Marist Brothers. In addition, given that France was ramping up its secularization policies regarding education – which since 1880 had threatened the Congregations dedicated to education– Brother Dositheus supported the Brothers' departure from France, as he wrote: "I cannot help thinking that, if the French Government does not want us here, the good Lord, for whom all means are suitable, could use this, at any given time, to facilitate the Marist Brothers' work abroad".

A second letter from Brother Dositheus – dated the same year and written from the same place as the first – mentioned that there was already a tentative plan to send Brothers to Chile. Then Father Thomas Darbois sent a fourth letter to Brother Dositheus, dated November 16, 1901,

stressing how useful it would be to have Marist Brothers in the diocese of Santiago. He did not only express interest for the Brothers' coming but also indicated the reason why they were needed in Chile. Specifically, Darbois disclosed a conflictual situation between the *Brothers of the Christian Schools* and *Saint Thomas Aquinas Society*.

As noted above, this lay Society was in charge of managing a number of primary schools in the country. Some of them had been entrusted to the Lasallians and others to zealous private Catholic educators, such as those of Saint Teresa teachers college. The conflict with the Lasallians was due to the autonomy they demanded regarding their schools. The Society's way of functioning was similar to that of public schools: they had a team that supervised the schools and collected data about their operations. As Darbois said in his letter: "The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools will not allow this" because the supervision visits did not only hinder the daily school schedule but also compromised the Brothers' authority, even in front of the students. Despite the Brothers' constant complaints, they were still running two schools, but there were four others that needed new people in charge. According to Darbois' opinion, that was precisely the apostolic field for the Marists.¹³

¹³ "Carta de P. Thomas Darbois al Hno. Dositheus", Bordeaux, 16 de noviembre 1901. Transcrita en L. Rubio, op. cit., pp. 98- 103.

Father Darbois could already see the expansion of the Marists to Chile. In the meantime, the situation in France, already unfavorable to the teaching congregations, was becoming more uncertain each day, and culminated finally in the enactment of the Combes Laws in 1903 and 1904.¹⁴ Chile, by contrast, offered a welcoming, calm, and promising territory where the Marists could establish themselves. In Chile, the tension between religion and politics generated by the so-called *Lay Laws* (*Leyes Liaicas*) in the last decades of the 19th century had already lost momentum. Nevertheless, Father Darbois' active efforts to bring the Marist Brothers to the country did not achieve a positive result.

In 1908, there was a third attempt to bring the Marists to Chile, this time led by Father A. Royer, Redemptorist Provincial of Chile. His request was motivated by Father Samuel Sandoval, parish priest of Saint James the Apostle Catholic Church in Santiago. He was funding a vocational school for men and wanted to hand it over to a religious Congregation. When Father Royer heard about his concern, the *Congregation of the Little Brothers of Mary*, which had several houses in

Colombia, came to his mind. Father Sandoval asked him to write to Brother Stratonique, the recently-elected Marist Superior General, or to another priest in Colombia "who could start talks with these good Brothers and see if they want to settle in Chile".¹⁵ The letter was finally addressed to the Redemptorist Visitor of Colombia.

This Colombian mediator succeeded in contacting Brother Stratonique, who wrote directly to Father Sandoval on April 3, 1909, letting him know he was aware of his wish to see the Brothers direct a vocational school in his parish, but also stating that, given the limited number of Brothers, he could not give a positive answer to his request. Persecution in France had affected the formation houses, which were slowly but promisingly beginning to recover, according to the Superior General, which meant that in a not-too-distant future there could be enough Brothers to carry out new foundations. Therefore, another Chilean initiative to bring the Marists to our country failed. However, it was the first time that a Chilean request was directly answered by the Superior General.

¹⁴ The so-called Combes Secular Laws – enacted during the administration of President Émile Loubet at the request of Émile Combes, Minister of Education– prohibited that the Church had any access to teaching, abruptly banning a role it had played for a long time. These laws eventually led to the suppression and expulsion of many religious orders and congregations, including the Marists. For more details see : Gérard Cholvy, *Christianisme et société en France au XIXe siècle, 1790-1914*, Paris, edit. du Seuil, 2001, pp. 172- 189.

¹⁵ « Lettre du P. Royer au Frère Stratonique », Santiago, 25 août 1908, transcrite dans L. Rubio, op. cit., pp. 105-107.

b. Bishop Martin Rucker's intervention, and Father Joseph Maubon's final step in 1910

In 1910, Monsignor Martín Rucker was appointed Vicar General of Santiago by Archbishop José Ignacio González Eyzaguirre. In this capacity, Monsignor Rucker made several trips to Europe, where he met Brother Adventinus in Valencia, Spain, and the Marist Superiors in Grugliasco, Italy. This was first meetings with a Church leader from Chile. Although it did not give Monsignor Rucker the outcome he wanted, it did allow him to see in person the educational work of the Marists in Spain. In Italy, he met Brother Michaëlis, the Brother Assistant General in charge of the American region. Unfortunately, there are no minutes or notes about the conversation or possible agreements of the meeting with the Marist Superiors in Grugliasco. In his *Marist History*, Brother Cristóbal points out that “no agreement was reached, but he was told that Reverend Brother Michaëlis, an Assistant, had to visit the schools in Latin America the following year and, since he was stopping in Chile, could address the issue on the ground”¹⁶

In the first months of 1910, when Monsignor Rucker returned from Europe, he decided to take the final steps to bring a religious teaching congregation to Chile. The Christian Center's

board and, therefore, the Archbishop of Santiago, appointed Father Joseph Maubon, Visitor of the Assumptionists, as negotiator. The specific goal of the negotiations was to “deal with the way to bring a new teaching congregation from Europe to staff Catholic schools”. By then, the Marist Superiors were finally open to the idea of sending Brothers to Chile. The General Council's minutes – after meeting in Grugliasco, presided over by Brother Stratonique, Superior General – specified the actions that were taken in response to the various proposals made by Father Joseph Maubon in Chile on behalf of Archbishop González Eyzaguirre. In concrete, what the Archbishop wanted from the Brothers was “about fifteen of them to open industrial and commercial vocational schools in three or four of the major provincial capitals of Chile”¹⁷. The details of the proposal speak about the educational needs of the Church, specifically regarding the area of technical education, which by then included a few commerce vocational schools run by the Salesians, a number of evening schools offering industrial vocational education under the direction of several pious associations, and the workshop-schools organized by municipal boards.

Archbishop González Eyzaguirre's request was clear, although not specific enough, a fact that eventually delayed the process. It not only lacked detailed information but also over-

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ *Acta Consejo General*, 28 de Junio de 1910. En León, op. cit., p. 34.

looked important aspects, about which the Superior asked the Archbishop for very precise information: general conditions, school programs, state of the school buildings, education funding, settling-in expenses, furniture, clothing for the Brothers, etc.¹⁸ After asking the Archbishop's office for this practical information, another

letter from Father Maubon to the Marist Superior General indicated the ecclesiastical authority's positive attitude regarding the Brothers' arrival, and also his own. This time, Maubon specified all aspects relating to the Brothers' establishment in Chile. The text is rich in details and it is well worth quoting some excerpts:

In Chile, monthly remuneration of 100 pesos is enough for livelihood and support of a religious, given that overall expenses regarding accommodation, repairs and school furniture are assumed by the Diocesan Administration in every free school.

Uniforms, sheets, towels, and other bedclothes would be provided by the founders according to the number of Brothers they request.

The Curia provided 1000 pesos for each Brother's trip in a similar school project it organized.

Some of the free schools are already operating with lay teachers. The Curia would amicably transfer them to the Brothers, without having to fear any friction.

The establishment of other free schools will take place when the Diocesan Administration gets the necessary funds.

There is also a need for paid schools and boarding schools. The Congregation itself will realize this need, and can always count on the Diocesan authority's moral support for this kind of foundations, and on its material support in case this authority itself requested them.

Regarding vocational education – industrial, agricultural, and commercial – for now the Curia only asks for theoretical instruction.

The teaching of Spanish is enough in free schools; French and English will be necessary in paid schools¹⁹.

Once these conditions were studied and accepted, the General Council session of October 21, 1910, authorized the formation of a community

of Brothers for the foundation in Chile²⁰. This decision was probably made rather hastily, given the circumstances of the time, since the Gener-

¹⁸ « Lettre du Frère Stratonique au Père J. Maubon », Grugliasco, 29 juin 1910. Dans les Archives Provinciales Assomptionniste, Santiago du Chili, cité dans León, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

¹⁹ « Lettre de J. Maubon au Frère Stratonique », Santiago, 22 août 1910. Archives Provinciales Assomptionnistes de Santiago du Chili, dans León, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

²⁰ *Acta Consejo General*, 21 de octubre 1910. En León, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

al Council needed to relocate the Brothers from San Andrés de Palomar, and other Brothers from Barcelona and surroundings, who had left their schools because of the Spanish Revolution and the so-called Tragic Week of Barcelona in July 1909²¹. These facts, besides the implementation of the Combes Laws in France, were enough to convince the Superiors that the request from Chile was a dignified way to rescue the Brothers and send them to an educational apostolate in countries in need and which were not suffering from such social unrest.

After the General Council reached agreement, Brother Michaëlis, Assistant General, wrote to Father Maubon letting him know the final decision of sending the first Marist Brothers to Chile, something of great historical significance. The letter was sent from Grugliasco, dated November 15, 1910. This document marked the moment of the establishment of the Brothers' Congregation in Chile, more precisely in Los Andes. From there, the Marist charism shone through the country.

The letter stated:

Satisfied with the explanations that you kindly sent us, and fully trusting the benevolence of His Excellency the Archbishop, as well as the charitable support you have offered us, the Council of the Very Reverend Brother accepts the proposals from the Curia, and promises Brothers for a first foundation in the Diocese of Santiago at the beginning of the new schoolyear. Before then, that is, in mid-January, I will personally have the pleasure, God willing, to greet you and pay my respects to His Excellency the Archbishop, as I pass through Chile, which will allow us to agree on some other details²².

The Congregation committed to send four Brothers for a first foundation in the Archdiocese of Santiago. This first community had to be in place by February 1911 to launch the schoolyear in the center they were to direct. The chosen place was Los Andes.

After writing to Father Joseph Maubon, Brother Michaëlis left the Motherhouse of Grugliasco and

started his journey across Latin America, not only to monitor personally the details of the Chilean Foundation, but also to visit the schools of Argentina, Peru, Colombia and Mexico, as a delegate of the Reverend Brother Superior General. He took the opportunity to study on site a practical way to facilitate, if possible, the foundations that had been frequently and insistently requested in Chile and Peru.

²¹ E. Corredera, *La Semana Trágica*. Zaragoza: Edit. Luis Vives, 1980.

²² "Carta del Hno. Michaelis al P. J. Maubon", Grugliasco, 15 de noviembre 1910. Archivo Provincial Asuncionista de Santiago de Chile, en León, *op. cit.*, p 39.

Brother Michaëlis' trip to South America did not bring about any changes for the Chilean foundation. He probably settled some administrative details, but the bulk of the negotiations and the final agreement had been already defined in Grugliasco by the General Council. The five-year agreement was signed on February 2, 1911, by Brother Michaëlis, who was the Visitor for Latin America and represented the Marists, and Monsignor Rücker, on behalf of the Archdiocese of Santiago. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the contract is that it endorsed the Brothers' freedom to follow their teaching methods and the possibility of the Congregation to make the necessary changes regarding staff²³. These were not secondary matters given that, as mentioned above, they had elicited serious disagreements between the Brothers of the Christian Schools and the Saint Thomas Aquinas Society a number of years earlier²⁴.

3. CREATION OF THE CHILE-PERU DISTRICT, AND ASSESSMENT OF THAT PERIOD

Administrative autonomy from Spain developed as an effect of the strength that the Chile-Peru District

was acquiring, especially after the First World War. The hostilities hampered the flow of Brothers from Europe to Chile and, even worse, the flow of novices. Therefore, there was an urgent need for a local formation house, so in 1918 the Brothers opened Saint Joseph Novitiate on Hornillas Street, at the corner with Vivaceta Street in Independencia, which is part of the northern metropolitan area of Santiago. The novitiate was the first house the Brothers had in the city. It belonged to the Archdiocese which had received it as a donation from Father Prudencio Herrera to be used as seat for a Commercial and Artistic Institute²⁵, a school that apparently was never built, at least while the Brothers lived there. In 1922, this house also became a juniorate for vocations still coming from Spain, or from Chile and Peru. In addition, from the beginning this house was the seat of the Visitor for the Chile-Peru District.

The legal status the District received from the Chilean government in 1914, and the decree of approval it received from the Church in 1915 to establish the Congregation in the country, were two important facts that strengthened its autonomy, besides facilitating the flow of monetary aid, and the transfer of property. The letter asking the Church to au-

²³ E. Belloso FMS *et al*, *Memorias del Instituto Chacabuco (1911- 2001)*, Santiago, Provincia Marista de Chile, 2001, p. 27.

²⁴ "Carta del P. Thomas Darbois al Hno. Superior General", Bordeaux, 16 de noviembre de 1901. En Rubio, *op. cit.*, pp. 98- 103.

²⁵ "Carta del Arzobispo de Santiago al Superior y al Señor Ecónomo de los Maristas, 25 de julio de 1917", en *AASCh*, 68, 86, "Hermanos Maristas de la Enseñanza".

thorize the Brothers' work in Chile briefly described the situation of the Congregation in 1915 as follows:

The Curia of Santiago has already placed the following five houses/schools under the Brothers' direction, listed in order of foundation: 180 students in Los Andes, 150 in Curicó, 150 in Quillota, 70 in Rancagua, and 180 in the parish-school of Rengo, which means that 730 students have been entrusted to the care of 26 Brothers. In view of this, the undersigned believes the time is opportune to request from Your Most Illustrious Excellency the grace of a decree of approval authorizing the Institute of the Marist Brothers to teach in Chile”²⁶.

After 18 years, the goal of the Church to bring the Marist Brothers to Chile had materialized and borne fruit. In 1929, 14 years after the civil and ecclesiastical approval, the Chilean sector of the District was solidly established: the number of Brothers had increased from 26 in 1915 to 65 in 1929; and the students had gone from 730 to 1799, distributed across five schools and a formation house. The Congregation had taken root in Chile, enjoyed a certain degree of influence in the local communities surrounding its schools, which included select students, many of whom were the children of the authorities and prominent local citizens. Its teaching was already appreciated and acknowledged by the State's supervision agents²⁷.

The Marist Brothers' educational project fitted very well into the local demand for education. But what kind of students did the Marist schools

have? In general terms, there was a heterogeneous student body but with certain traits in common. Their families were urban and middle-class.

The families' social position was mainly determined by the father's profession (the mother's occupation was seldom registered). As we can see in the graph, most of them worked in the cities and had semi-professional intermediate-qualification jobs, that is, positions that required technical skills rather than academic training. Trading was the most important activity for the fathers of Marist students. Most of them, given the social situation in the country at the time (1920), were small and medium-sized businessmen. Many of them were probably owners who hired more than one employee, and their spending capacity allowed them to have savings and invest in the education of their children. The per-

²⁶ AASCh, 68, 86, “Hermanos Maristas de la Enseñanza”, Visitador de los Hermanos Maristas en Chile, Hno. Andrés, “Hermanos Maristas de la Enseñanza, su establecimiento en la Arquidiócesis, 1915”.

²⁷ Ver *Registros Diversos, Constitución, 1923-1944*, año 1929. En AHPMCh.

centage of farmers was rather homogeneous because the agricultural character of Chilean society remained unchanged even after the 1930s. Both farmers and shopkeepers were small or medium-sized businessmen.

We can also see certain homogeneity in Santiago – except for the liberal professions, which required university studies – whose high percentage reflects the specificity of the Capital vis-à-vis the Provinces. Santiago was the city in which higher education was concentrated, and where families could afford college expenses. Therefore, the students of Instituto Alonso de Ercilla probably belonged to the upper middle-class, not to the emerging sector of state employees that prevailed in the Provinces.

Given the context of Catholic education in 1910, the Church promoted secondary instruction through the Christian Center as an answer to the overwhelming presence of public high schools. We can say that Catholic schools were born to counterbalance public secondary education in the area of humanities, especially in places where Catholic education was scarce. And yet, agreements between the Church and the Congregation did not explicitly define the nature of the education the Marists should provide. The Brothers sensed it through the continuous correspondence providing data and information on Chile that Grugliasco requested.

Once in Chile, with a few years of experience in Los Andes and Curicó, after getting to know the country's situation, the Brothers dedicated fully to the teaching of the humanities, bringing it to places where it was lacking, and enhancing it where it was already established. The warm welcome they found – in some places, such as in Curicó, people even came to pick them up when they first arrived – allows us to infer that there was a real demand for Catholic secondary schooling. This was not because it was denied them – since public high schools were always an option – but because they wanted it. The Brothers gradually satisfied the desire of that section of society that wanted the opportunity to provide Christian education to their children. Therefore, with the only exception of Rengo – where the teaching was not carried out entirely by the Marists, and where it had not consolidated yet – local citizens devoted themselves to sustain the Marist educational works, and to assist them through their contacts, influences and financial means, and assure their continuance.

This was quite important, considering that the schools did not belong to the Brothers, and that they were not subsidized by the government, besides the fact that the funding from the Christian Center and the Church was constantly diminishing. From the beginning, the only means the Brothers had to guarantee their livelihood and the ongoing work of their schools in Chile, was the tuition paid

by parents and guardians, their subsidies and donations, and above all, the social and economic influence at the local level of parents, teachers the enormous group of alumni who, in turn, wanted the same kind of education for their children.

CONCLUSION

The arrival of the Marist Brothers was requested, organized, and finally achieved particularly by the Chilean Catholic Church (Archdiocese of Santiago), through the Christian Center and strongly supported by it. It was a way of not losing its influence in society, mainly in the area of secondary education (then only the preserve of the elite), as part of a project to deal with the hegemony of public high schools, mainly in provincial cities where Catholic education had little or no presence. As part of their effort to settle in Chile, the Marists had to adapt to what the Church wanted and to the new geographic situation, without neglecting their charism, nor their evangelical and pedagogical values brought from Europe.

In 1929, when the Marists settled in Santiago, they were directing five schools in the provinces and a formation house for their Brothers in the city. The founding of Instituto Alonso

de Ercilla represented the conclusion of the founding period of the Marist Brothers in the country. It differed from the earlier foundations in Chile because of its presence in the country's capital city, and in this, was placed at the highest level of Catholic schools, giving it more prestige and influence. The buildings and grounds of Instituto Alonso de Ercilla were the first property owned by the Marist Brothers in Chile, twenty years after their arrival. The rest of the schools belonged to the Christian Center or the Archdiocese, according to signed contracts. In that sense, a school in the capital had even more symbolic meaning for the Congregation.

The independence that came from having their own institution close to the Archdioceses of Santiago and Concepción advanced the process for establishing what would eventually become the Marist Province of Chile. A major step in this direction was taken in 1934 with the official establishment of the District of Chile-Peru, with more autonomy from Spain, and then the official erecting in these two countries of separate Provinces in 1946.

N.B.: Historian, former Marist student, and coauthor of the book: *100 years of Marist presence in Chile* (11/05/2001).

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RESEARCH ON THE ORIGIN OF WELL-KNOWN MARIST MOTTOS (1815-1852)



Br André Lanfrey

From “Holy Marian Slavery” to “Our Ordinary Resource”

*All for the greater glory
of God and the honor of Mary;
All to Jesus through Mary,
all to Mary for Jesus;
Our Ordinary Resource.*

These are some mottos
or expressions that

Father Champagnat has left us,
so we believe.

But we have not well researched
their provenance
and how they developed.

Therefore, I will take some
of them to try to unravel
how they were established
as part of our patrimony.

One, in particular,
is a little surprising.

1. MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT’S RESOLUTIONS OF 1815

When Marcellin Champagnat was
a seminarian at Saint-Irénée, he left us
a notebook of *Resolutions that I put
under the protection of the Blessed
Virgin*, which included the following:

- Keep silence in the corridors and
stairs, in class, and during the
reading.
- Walk with everyone indiscrimi-
nately during recess and without
wasting too many words.
- Avoid gossip, lies, and exaggera-
tions.
- Pay attention in class and during
conferences.

The fact that Marcellin referred to
the recitation of the Breviary in his first
resolution means that it was written af-
ter his sub-diaconate began on Janu-
ary 6, 1814. A fifth resolution is clearly
dated May 3, 1815, and a seventh was
written in June¹. These resolutions can

¹ The expression *If the King returns* could have been written before Waterloo (June 18)
or shortly after. The King returned to Paris in early July.

seem rather trivial if we do not consider the context of political upheaval: the fall of the Empire, the First Restoration, and Napoleon's Hundred Days, all of which brought about much unrest in the seminary. The resolutions, on the contrary, indicate that Marcellin had decided not become part of the atmosphere of discussion and political and religious divisions within the seminary.

But paragraph four stands apart from any ascetic or disciplinary concern, and expresses a surprising Marian spirituality:

My God, you know my sorrow. Have mercy on me,
I beg you. Blessed Virgin, you know that
I am your slave. I am indeed unworthy of such
great favor but that is precisely how your goodness
towards me will overflow. Amen!²

In this invocation to Mary, the word 'slave' seems rather strange, especially given that such 'slavery' is perceived as a favor. From these few lines, with quite an elliptical wording, we can draw the following tentative interpretation: I am committed to serving you as a slave and you have accepted me as such despite my unworthiness. May your favor continue to bless me as a glorious witness to God's mercy and to your kindness.

a. The Marian slavery spirituality

Although we find the word 'slave' only once in Father Champagnat's writings, it is so deeply engraved in the history of Marian devotion that we cannot take it as casual wording. Inés de San Pablo, a Conceptionist Franciscan Sister, founded the first known Holy Slavery Confraternity between 1575 and 1595 in Spain³. These Confraternities multiplied in the seventeenth century but their name drew much criticism, and the wrist iron chain that members wore seemed ostentatious and even shocking⁴. Although it was condemned by Pope Benedict XIV in 1758, this devotion went on during the 19th century. In the city of Ars, Jean-Marie Vianney was still admitting members into a Holy Slavery Confraternity from 1845 to 1852⁵.

This was not only a popular devotion. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Cardinal Bérulle – who introduced the Discalced Carmelite nuns to France, and founded the French School of Spirituality – recommended the Carmelites under his jurisdiction to take a Marian Slavery vow, something which elicited much opposition. And Louis de Montfort, who died in 1716, exemplified the

² A third part dated May 3, 1815, eve of the Ascension (during Napoleon's Hundred Days), reiterated previous resolutions and added new ones.

³ *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, t. 4, col. 1135.

⁴ Pierre Collet, *Vie de Henri Marie Boudon grand archidiacre d'Evreux*, Paris, Hérissant, 1753, t. 1 p. 352.

⁵ Monsignor Fourrey, *op. cit.* p. 307-310.

doctrine of Marian slavery almost a century later.

Actually, the term “slavery” was more of a problem than the devotion itself. But we should understand it within the cultural context of the time and not in a juridical sense⁶. It was, in fact, an interpretation and a mystical transposition of medieval courtly literature. The knight in love with his lady (Domina = a mistress, a patroness) considered himself as her vassal, being completely at her service. Marian slavery or servitude must be hence understood in a metaphorical sense: surrendering to the woman one loves above all things and hoping for her kindness in return.

b. Henri-Marie Boudon (1624-1702), apostle of Marian Slavery

Father Champagnat’s library in 1840 included the *Life of Henry-Marie Boudon, Grand Archdeacon of*

Évreux, written by Jean Collet, and first published in 1753. He was an exemplary priest⁷, an ardent missionary, and a mystic who adhered to Marian Slavery (V. 1, Book 3, XLIX pp.352ff). He took a vow of chastity as Mary’s vassal in 1641 (V. 1, Book 3, p.379).

His many spiritual books⁸ had extraordinary success. They were translated into Latin, Italian, Spanish, German, Polish and Flemish. Despite their often-criticized wordiness, they were published until the nineteenth century⁹. Through his books, Boudon provided one of the principal means for diffusing the French school of spirituality, and it was partly through him that Bérullian spirituality was imbued by Colin and Champagnat¹⁰.

His spirituality is centered on the love of God, before whom all creatures are nothing. His Christology is based on the contemplation of the mystery of God and God’s veiled grandeur¹¹. His Marian spirituality is at once very affective and also rooted in

⁶ We should remember the importance of chivalric romance in the 16th-century Europe, and particularly in Spain, as in the cases of Ignatius of Loyola, and Don Quixote in love with Dulcinea.

⁷ Archdeacon in the Diocese of Évreux in 1654, he strived to restore ecclesiastical discipline and fought against Jansenism.

⁸ *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, t. 1, col. 1890. Boudon’s book was added to the *List of Prohibited Books* by the Catholic Church because of the anti-mystical context of the end of the 17th century. In one of his letters, Boudon listed the thirty books he had written, and stated: “Michallet still has the *Devotion to the Slavery towards the Admirable Mother of God* (published by Lambert in 1688), but I do not speak about it because Rome has prohibited this devotion, given the abuses that were taking place”.

⁹ His complete works were published by Migne in 1856 (*Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, t. 1 col. 1887-1893).

¹⁰ Brother François also refers to Boudon quite frequently in his manuscripts.

¹¹ Yves Krumenacker, *L’école française de spiritualité*, le Cerf, Paris, 1998, p. 500-503.

a God-centered and Christological vision: although Mary is nothing as a creature, she was raised by God to the rank of sovereign because she is associated to the self-emptying of the Son. All creatures rightly recognize their nothingness before her.

I find significant points of convergence between *The Holy Ways of the Cross*, a small book by Boudon first published in 1671, and the ‘slavery’ that Father Champagnat mentions. In these pages, Father Boudon exalts Mary’s role in Redemption, particularly at the

foot of the Cross, and invites devoted souls to enter this spiritual path. This treatise on the mystical life is strongly inspired by Saint Teresa of Avila. The preamble, entitled “To Our Lady of Mercy”, offers the book to Mary as a tribute because it is “*something that belongs to you, given my condition of slave*”. Then, after greeting Mary with the titles of Sovereign Lady, Magnificent Queen, Lady of All Mercy, he contemplates her sufferings. The following comparison between Champagnat’s and Boudon’s words suggests the possibility of a direct influence:

Champagnat (<i>Resolutions</i> of 1815)	Boudon (Preamble to <i>The Holy Ways of the Cross</i>)
My God, you know my misery. Have mercy on me, I beg you.	(Invocation to Our Lady of Mercy)
Blessed Virgin, you know that I am your slave.	Blessed Virgin, this small book is rendered at your sacred feet [...] as something that belongs to you, given my condition of slave.
Truly, I am unworthy of such great a favor.	I must confess, my Divine Princess, that I should have died a long time ago after having considered your extreme sufferings; but on the other hand, I recognize that I am completely unworthy of such a great a grace.
but that is precisely how your goodness towards me will overflow. Amen! ¹²	Suffer, my Glorious Lady, these impulses of love towards (from) my poor heart in your kind presence, and obtain for me [...] the love you had for the holy ways of the Cross. Amen!

¹² A third part dated May 3, 1815, eve of the Ascension (during Napoleon’s Hundred Days), reiterated previous resolutions and added new ones.

At the end of Book III of the same work by Boudon, a “Prayer to our Lady of Martyrs” has a very similar structure:

It is fair, then, that the Church honors you as her worthy Queen, and in communion with these feelings, the last and most unworthy of its children kneels before the throne of your greatness to pay his respects to you as **your slave**, asking you to assist him as Lady and Queen of Martyrs. O, my good Lady, **make me worthy** to mingle my tears with yours, and to keep company with you, standing upright and firm at the foot of the Cross with you.

c. An essential and early trait of Marcellin Champagnat’s spirituality?

Whether or not Champagnat had read Boudon by 1815, one thing is certain: this author was one of the great proponents of the spiritual sensibility that informs his prayer¹³. In addition, his spiritual doctrine particularly clarifies Champagnat’s abovementioned resolution, the sense of which we can now understand in a more nuanced way. Mary is Our Lady of Mercy because she is an image of divine mer-

cy. She does not only show mercy towards sinners, but grants her favor to those of them who, despite their unworthiness, agree to share the desolation of the Cross that makes her the Queen of Martyrs¹⁴.

d. Possible membership to an association of Marian slavery

Was this spirituality of slavery a personal choice of Champagnat after his reading Boudon, or was it a pointer to his belonging to an association of seminarians that followed such spirituality? We should keep in mind that there were pious associations under various names within the seminaries. In his book *The Real Curé of Ars (Le curé d’Ars authentique)*, Bishop Fourrey¹⁵ recalls that Jean-Marie Vianney (1786-1859) was part of an association of Holy Slavery of Mary in the Seminary of Verrières in 1812-13, and that its members wore a chain as an emblem. The author quotes an extract from the life of Jean-Marie Vianney written by Father Raymond, which can be found in the archives of Belley-Ars:

¹³ There is no evidence that Champagnat read *The Holy Slavery* by Boudon. On the other hand, Champagnat’s library in 1840 included the *Life of Henry-Marie Boudon, Grand Archdeacon of Évreux*, written by Jean Collet, and first published in 1753. The book described this exemplary priest and ardent missionary, justified Marian Slavery (V. 1, book 3, XLIX p. 352...), and presented his vow of chastity as Mary’s vassal in 1641 (V. 1, book 3, p. 379). He was, therefore, a personality that Marcellin Champagnat knew well.

¹⁴ While he was in Lavalla, Champagnat often visited the small chapel of our *Notre Dame de Pitié* or Our Lady of Mercy outside town. In 1836 he had painted on the wall of the new Chapel several Marian titles among which was “Regina Martyrum” (Queen of Martyrs).

¹⁵ *Le curé d’Ars authentique*, L’échelle de Jacob, Dijon, 1^{ère} édition en 1964 ; 2^{nde} édition, 2009, p. 63.

He declared himself as a devoted slave by joining the Holy Slavery of Mary. He was one of the keenest and most loyal associates [...]. He already wore the signs of the scapular and the Holy Rosary, but he proudly started wearing the chains of the Holy Slavery¹⁶.

However, it is very unlikely that Marcellin Champagnat and Jean-Marie Vianney had belonged to the same association in Verrières, since no documents from either of them indicates a personal relationship. But many associations in the seminaries of Verrières and Saint-Irénée could have cultivated a Marian Slavery spirituality without bearing the name, as I will show below. Let us not forget that the first Marists were initially one association of seminarians among others.

e. The example of a petite société in the seminary of Clermont-Ferrand

During my research in the diocesan archives of Clermont-Ferrand, I found many statutes of associations that operated within the seminary, in particular the *Pious Association established in the philosophy seminary of Montferrand to honor Our Lord Jesus Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist*, and which began in May 1871¹⁷. It was founded relatively late, but its rules followed the model of several much older associations¹⁸. Thus, in the *Consecration to Mary* at the end of its rules we find traces of a Holy Slavery association:

O Immaculate Virgin, mother of Jesus and our mother [...] through you we want to reach Jesus who is calling us [...]. O Mary, to you do we wish to come so as to get to know Jesus, to have Jesus; you will show him to us through your virtues; you will give him to us by grace [...]. In order to earn these favors we are asking from your tenderness, and become less unworthy of Jesus, we commit to your service as slaves, too happy to hold our own will no more, and to obey the mother of He who made himself obedient unto death on the cross, and who still obeys thousands of priests each day out of his love for humankind.

All to Jesus through Mary!

All to Mary for Jesus!

*Amen!*¹⁹

¹⁶ During Champagnat's beatification process, Father Raymond made a somewhat similar statement: *He made great progress in piety, showed great devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and was a member of an association called the Marian Slavery. I learned this from his fellow students or from himself.*

¹⁷ In the city of Clermont-Ferrand, Central France.

¹⁸ In particular, an Association to honor the Holy Sacrament founded in the Major Seminary of Montferrand in 1837.

¹⁹ The Consecration to Jesus in the Eucharist preceding this text also had a very Marian tone: *You know it, Blessed Virgin, it is through you that we want to go to Jesus, your son; it is also through you that we want to love him. Offer our hearts to him now, so that they are always his but, at the same time – O Divine Mother! – offer your love and prayers for us to him.*

This text indicates the same spiritual path we can see in Fathers Boudon and Champagnat, besides including the same motto that the Marist Brothers have. Therefore, the hypothesis that in 1814-15 Champagnat belonged to an association of seminarians at Saint-Irénée who followed the Holy Slavery spirituality cannot be dismissed. After his involvement in the Marist project, certainly after June 1815, he did not use the term 'slave' anymore. However, could we not say that the Fourvière Pledge of 1816 itself was a commitment of the same nature as the Marian slavery but in a less archaic language? Anyway, whether or not he was a member of an association prior to the Marist group, Marcellin Champagnat had contact with the Holy Slavery spirituality in 1814-15, from which he could have taken the motto that he later gave to the Marist Brothers.

2. "HOLY DEDICATION": SOURCE OF THE MOTTO "ALL TO JESUS THROUGH MARY..."

In his book *Spirituality of Saint Marcellin Champagnat* (Madrid-Marista, 2003), Brother Manuel Mesonero Sánchez very usefully indicated a literary source that employed, and perhaps

invented, the motto of *All to Jesus through Mary, all to Mary for Jesus* (pp. 97-98). It was an anonymous book written in 1808 and entitled *The Holy Devotion or the Devotees of Jesus and Mary (Le Saint Dévouement ou les Dévoués de Jésus et de Marie)*. In 1840, there was a copy of this book in Champagnat's library. Its author was actually Father Jean-Baptiste-Marie Aubriot de La Palme (1752-1826), a prominent churchman from the diocese of Chambéry.

Ordained priest in 1776, Father de La Palme directed the seminary in Chambéry between 1780 and 1792, and battled Jansenist influences. The author adds that he was one of the animators of the Savoyard AA, which was associated with the Turin AA. These secret associations of seminarians (*Associations des Amis*), imbued with fervor and apostolic spirit, played an important role in spiritual opposition to the Revolution and the Empire. When Savoy was invaded by the French, Father de la Palme refused to take the oath of loyalty to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and retired to Turin in 1793. Between 1795 and 1796, he organized the refractory Church of the diocese, and then returned to Chambéry in 1797. Under the Empire, he participated in the clandestine resistance to imperial despotism especially through his book *The Holy Devotion*²⁰. After the Empire,

Receive from Mary's hands - O Jesus! - these hearts that want to be yours. Bless them, embrace them, and grant us that, according to your will, they may be one - in you, by you, and for you - in the same way that you and your Father are One.

²⁰ Hence, the anonymity of the work definitely intended to avoid conflict. Let us not forget that the imperial power persecuted all religious associations.

he became a very ultramontane and quite rigorist clergyman²¹.

His 437-page book, quite complicated and wordy, is mainly directed to the members of the so-called *The Devotees of Jesus and Mary* (*Les dévoués de Jésus et de Marie*). This was not just a devotional association but group of some spiritual rigor that closely followed the rules of the AAs. In the introduction, the author claims to be drawing together different lines of devotion: the associations of Holy Slavery of Mary or of Jesus and Mary, the associations of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and the associations dedicated to the Sacred Heart. Eschewing the term ‘slavery’, which was problematic, and also the word ‘devout’ (*dévo*t) that had become pejorative, he preferred to speak of ‘devotion’ (*dévouement*) and ‘devotee’ (*dévo*ué). But it was actually a formal change. The spirit of the former spiritual lines was in fact preserved and consolidated through the Association’s motto: *All to Jesus through Mary, all to Mary for Jesus*, which should be understood as *the Associates’ commitment to devote themselves and belong absolutely to Jesus and Mary* (*The Holy Devotion*, p. 233), knowing that by serving and honoring Mary they were serving Jesus Christ. They recognized Mary’s role as mediator by serving Jesus

through Mary. Dedicating themselves to Mary for Jesus amounted to acknowledging her as Mother of the Savior, and recognizing the intimacy between Mother and Son. Finally, it was also a way to honor Jesus’ dependence on Mary.

Therefore, the motto *All to Jesus through Mary* was created, or at least disseminated, by Father Aubriot de la Palme, assisted by the AA in Chambéry, which was keen to unify and modernize traditional devotions with a view to better coherence in the spiritual resistance movement. His influence on Marcellin Champagnat is certain, regardless of the date in which he acquired the book²².

3.A MOTTO OF FATHER CHAMPAGNAT OR AN INITIATIVE OF BROTHER JEAN-BAPTISTE?

The fact that *The Holy Devotion* was in Champagnat’s library and that it contained the exact Marist motto did not lead Brother Manuel Mesonero Sánchez to conclude that it was a self-evident link. For him, this is a “substitute” motto used by Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet, which we do not find in the writings of the Founder.

²¹ *Dictionnaire du monde religieux dans la France contemporaine, La Savoie*, sous la direction de Christian Sorrel, Beauchesne, 1996, notice très documentée p. 57-58.

²² It does not seem that this book was reedited. It is unlikely that Marcellin Champagnat had it in Verrières. Acquiring it when he was in Saint Irenaeus in 1813-1816 seems more feasible.

He suggests that the motto *To the greater glory and honor of the august Mary, mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ* is the only clearly documented one (Mesonero, p. 99). Therefore, Brother Manuel's thesis, with its detailed reasoning, raises a question about the age of a motto that we usually think of as original.

a. The initial use of 'All to Jesus through Mary'

So what documentation do we have to support that the Marist motto comes from Father Champagnat? The most accessible document is the *Life* (Part II, chapter 7, p. 341):

During his time in the seminary, his piety towards the Mother of God increased perceptibly [...].
His motto from then on became:
'All to Jesus through Mary, and all to Mary for Jesus'.
This saying reveals the spirit which guided him and was his rule of conduct throughout life.

By asserting that this formula was very soon used by Father Champagnat, Brother Jean-Baptiste adds weight to our hypothesis that he belonged to a Marian association during the seminary²³, probably influenced by the spirituality of The Holy Devotion. At the same time, the silence on this motto in the Founder's writings is problematic.

But we do not only have Champagnat's writings. In 1819, Brother François began his first retreat notebook (A.F.M. 5101.302) by using the motto of the Fourvière pledge: *In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, amen. O Holy Trinity (Saint Francis Xavier). All for the greater glory of God and the honor of the august Mary.* But in 1827 (p.127), at the opening of the retreat, he used a more complete formula: *In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. All for the greater glory of God and the honor of Mary. All to Jesus through Mary, all to Mary for Jesus.*

Should we conclude that *All to Jesus through Mary* became the motto of the Marist Brothers only in 1827? Whatever the case, it is a significant date, and I would be tempted to say that its collective use was born that year. The reason is that after the departure of Fathers Courveille and Terraillon in 1826, Father Champagnat became the only priest in the house, in addition to his being the Superior of the Brothers. But did not give up the Society of Mary, and that is why he kept the motto of 1816, completing it with a specific motto for the branch of the Brothers²⁴. The abovementioned text by Brother François would be the expression of a new situation regarding the project of the Hermitage.

²³ In this case, the influence of Father Aubriot de la Palme would be indirect.

²⁴ It is also the year when Champagnat started using the *Nisi Dominus* (Unless the Lord build the house). In his letter asking Bishop de Pins for help, dated on May 1827, he said: *Jesus and Mary will always be the solid support of my confidence.*

In the same notebook (p. 236), meditating on mortification, salvation, and the love of the Cross in 1831, Brother François uses the motto again in a more personal context:

Mortification of body and spirit in everything!
Prayer to Jesus and Mary in all my needs [...].
What use will all the things I did not do for God
have when the moment of death arrives?

All to Jesus through Mary, all to Mary for Jesus!

The motto of the Institute is thus seldom used in the Marist texts before 1840, but Brother François is not a minor authority, and it is unlikely that he invented the formula himself. Regarding the motto of *All to Jesus through Mary*, I think that the book by Father Aubriot de la Palme in Champagnat's library, plus the two texts by Brother François, especially that of 1827, are arguments in favor of a motto that was established during the time of Champagnat, who had greater freedom to express his personal spirituality to the Brothers after 1826.

4. MARY OUR ORDINARY RESOURCE – ITS ORIGIN

Brother Manuel Mesonero also challenged the historicity of the expression “Ordinary Resource”. Let us review the texts that mention it, af-

ter recalling that *The Holy Devotion* often uses the word “resource” but with different nuances and adjectives. Mary, in fact, is a *powerful resource in times of error* (p.20); a *joyful resource* (p.71); *she [...] promises her resources in all our needs* (p.75); she is *the resource of Christians* (p.86); and, above all, *whom shall I turn to, if not to you, who are the ordinary resource in all my needs?* (p.91). In any case, the word “resource” is used by many authors, and the influence of Father de La Palme cannot be held as exclusive. For example, Brother Manuel indicates that the book *The Month of May* by Francesco Lalomia uses the term in the same personal way²⁵.

The Marist Brothers, by contrast, used the formula in a collective sense. Brother Jean-Baptiste held that the expression was first used in 1830 when Father Champagnat reassured the Brothers regarding the threats of the Revolution: *Let us redouble our confidence in her and remind ourselves that she is our Ordinary Resource*. Then he introduced the singing of the *Salve Regina* every morning²⁶.

I would happily take 1830 as the date in which this formula was included, at a moment that was sealed the community's memory. And since the *Salve*, which was first sang in

²⁵ Manuel Mesonero Sánchez, op. cit., p. 100.

²⁶ Part II, chapter 7, p. 351. Presented again in *Opinions, Conferences, Sayings and Instructions*, chapter 1. “Ordinary Resource” appears three times in the same page.

times of danger, became a daily exercise, the notion of “ordinary resource” took root in a concrete practice. Moreover, this tradition must have been strong, given that article 6 of the Rule of 1852, in the chapter entitled *Devotion to Mary*, indicated: *Mary must be their ordinary resource in everything.*

However, even if Brother Jean-Baptiste and the Rule are important sources, they appear late in time. Brother François’ Notebooks themselves do not offer an older testimony. The first, which is somehow incomplete, dates from 1848 (Retreat Notebook 2, AFM 5101.303 p.738):

O Jesus, center and support of an entire Society devoted to your greater glory, unite more and more those who are part of it [...].
Mary, our Mother and First Superior, be our refuge, our counsel, and **our resource** in all dangers and in all needs of life.

In his notebooks – which are difficult to date²⁷ but that were written before 1850 for the most part – Brother François uses the term “ordinary resource” in an instruction entitled *Comparison between the religious and the saints* (Notebook 307, p.505):

Our Society bears the name of Mary because we are her children; she is our Mother, our Superior, our Ordinary Resource in all our needs. We pray to her,

we invoke her at every moment and, unceasingly, she gives us new signs of her benevolent protection and maternal care.

In Notebook 308 (p.678), the instruction “Our Mother Mary” includes a paragraph entitled “Mary is our Ordinary Resource”. But the most important part is the conclusion:

Father Champagnat had such confidence in Mary that with the help of this powerful Virgin nothing seemed impossible to him. He was often heard to declare: ‘If the whole world is against us, we have nothing to fear, provided the Mother of God is for us’. So in all his needs, in every difficult circumstance, it was Mary that he turned to; it was to her, after God, to whom he wanted to owe everything; it was from her protection that he expected everything.
Mary is our ordinary resource: such was his favorite expression (In Life. V. II; Ch. 7)²⁸.

In the same Notebook (p.1009), his “Reflections on the authorization of the Institute” of 1851 mentioned again the formula that was consecrated by the Rule the following year:

The Lord has always protected us: he has preserved, supported and increased our Society in an admirable way. In all our needs, in every difficult circumstance, he came to our rescue [...].
But let us not forget that it is through Mary that all these favors are granted to us. Our Good Mother has constantly shown her solicitous care, and has given us, at the right time,

²⁷ Some of these ‘instructions’ are notes taken by the Brothers from Champagnat’s talks but it is difficult to distinguish them clearly.

²⁸ See the 1989 edition (p. 351). These words are not a copy of the book but a personal interpretation by Brother François.

all the assistance we needed:

she has always been our ordinary resource

and her protection has never failed us [...].

She has watched over our houses,
over each of us and everything concerning us,
with the kind gestures and the goodness
of the most tender mother²⁹.

This instruction was certainly orally addressed to the Brothers during the retreat of 1851. That same year, however, the Circular dated on July 3, 1851 – announcing the legal recognition of the Congregation, and asking for a thanksgiving prayer – does not refer to Mary as “ordinary resource”, as if it were reserved as an oral expression.

In the light of these documents, I think that Father Champagnat did use the term “ordinary resource” among other titles given to Mary (Mother, First Superior, etc.) but without assigning a privileged status to it. Brother François, on the other hand, did so through his instructions because, I believe, he thought this title indicated Father Champagnat’s Marian spirit in a special way. Brother Jean-Baptiste probably used it in the same sense. As a result, an article of the Constitutions validated the title in 1852. If the first Brothers endorsed it at this time, it means that they deemed it to be consistent with their tradition. In addition, while though I do not fully agree with Brother Manuel’s thesis, I believe, together with him, that Brothers François and Jean-

Baptiste interpreted and firmly established an oral tradition between 1840 and 1852, and then the 2nd General Chapter officially approved it.

CONCLUSION

Marcellin Champagnat had a quite distinctive spiritual life before encountering the Marist group – as evidenced by the word “slave” that he quickly abandoned, although for the sake of a project that turned out to be quite similar. As for the motto *All to Jesus through Mary*, I gladly take Brother Jean-Baptiste seriously when he states that it was part of Champagnat’s spirituality since he was in the seminary. But the various layers of Champagnat’s spirituality had different fates. For example, it seems that he did not speak to anyone about Marian slavery, while the Marist pledge of 1816 was mentioned very early by Brother François. Regarding the motto *All to Jesus through Mary*, it was probably unknown to the Brothers before 1827. And the expression “ordinary resource” must have been first used in 1830 without having any special importance during Champagnat’s lifetime.

These are the best conclusions I can draw after analyzing the *Life* of Marcellin Champagnat of 1856 vis-à-vis the other documents presented above. But it is true – and Brother

²⁹ He still used this formula on June 28, 1863, and September 11, 1870 (Notebook 306, p. 38).

Manuel Mesonero's thesis is very useful in this sense – that Champagnat's successors did not limit themselves to gathering evidence on the Founder and the foundation years going from 1817 to 1840, but they also interpreted, organized, purified and mythicized the period a little. To some

extent, they replaced the abundant and diffuse oral tradition with the clarity and solidity of the written form. The challenge is to understand this late interpretation of the origins not as sacred nor as diabolic but as something legitimate that does not exclude other possible readings.

ANNEXE 1

ADDITIONAL FACTS REGARDING HOLY SLAVERY

The book *God Alone. Holy Slavery to the Admirable Mother of God*³⁰ by Boudon includes two treatises, which are basically two different books³¹: the first is a ten-chapter praise of the Holy Slavery devotion; the second focuses on Marian

devotion in general, understanding it as an imitation of the virtues of Mary and her great servants, particularly the angels, John the Evangelist and Bérulle. The book begins with a praise “To the Faithful Virgin” that amounts to an act of absolute allegiance to Mary as Mother and Sovereign, following the model of the angels, Saint John the Apostle and Jesus Christ himself:

Sovereign Queen of angels and men, lost in my nothingness and recognizing myself as entirely unworthy of coming to your holy presence, I still dare – counting on your maternal kindness, ordinary source of my sweetest hopes – to consecrate this book to you, for it is at the only service of your honor and your glory, for the only glory and the only honor of God alone, who is the only possession I desire and search in all things [...].

My life, both interior and exterior, and everything I possess belongs to you more than to myself – O my divine princess! – and since I have nothing left, everything I had belongs to you by my state and condition of servitude. Today, with all my heart (in the presence of the angels and Saint John, one of your truest slaves), I want and desire that you have special power over my soul, my state, my life, my actions, as things that belong to you in a new way due to a special right, through the force of my renewed determination of depending entirely on your maternity and sovereignty, abandoning myself to all you may want, surrendering myself fully to you power, and to all the effects of your sovereignty.

In brief, Marian slavery according to Boudon is a privileged state, a “favor”, an affiliation. It means moving from the Adamic creature, who wants to become God, to the creature that

is both annihilated and renewed by Christ and Mary through the Incarnation³². Becoming a Slave of Mary means surrendering to justice and truth while participating in the mystery

³⁰ I use a copy, published in Marseille in 1836, from the provincial library of Saint-Genis-Laval.

³¹ Boudon stated that he found inspiration in a little book from an unknown author, entitled ‘*Devotion of the Holy Slavery to the Mother of God*’ (chapter 3, page 11, and chapter 12, page 426).

³² Curiously, Boudon does not seem to notice the hymn of Philipians: “*He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave*”.

of salvation. This accords with the Bérullian tradition, as we can see in the last chapter entitled *Illustrious*

Slaves of the August Mother of God, which concludes with the following praise:

The zeal of the holy Cardinal de Bérulle – institutor³³ of the French Oratory, and one of the first superiors of the Carmelite Sisters in this Kingdom according to Saint Teresa's reform – triumphed concerning this devotion. He used all means to find slaves for the Mother of God. But his zeal was not exempt of setbacks, as it is usually the case: many people found much to complain about, but having been examined by the highest prelates of France, they granted him due approval, as his rare and strong devotion deserved.

Then comes praise of *the great Saint John the Evangelist, great apostle of affective love* [“dilection”], *dear favorite of the adorable Jesus, beloved son of the admirable Mother of God, cherubim of the new law, seraphim of Christianity, marvel and miracle of the Gospel!* At the end of the book, there is a *prayer offering oneself to the most Blessed Virgin as a slave*, which is mainly a recognition of our nothingness before the Trinity, and an act of surrender to God.

The Marian titles used by Boudon mainly indicate *sovereignty* (queen, princess, lady, patroness, sovereign), *maternity* to a lesser degree (mother of goodness, mother of affective love) and *virginity* (kind virgin, faithful virgin). And in a special chapter, Boudon recalls that *God alone is the foundation of the Slavery to the Blessed Virgin*.

³³ In the 19th century we said “founder”.

ANNEXE 2

SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST AND SAINT MARCELLIN'S SPIRITUALITY

As we have seen above, Boudon gives great importance to Saint John the Evangelist³⁴. It was under his influence perhaps that Marcellin Champagnat considered this apostle as a model for the servants of the Mother and the Son, according to one of his statements that Brother Jean-Baptiste dated in 1822 (*Life*, p.107):

It was only to the beloved disciple that Jesus entrusted his mother. He wanted us to understand that he grants a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin, only to privileged souls on whom he has particular designs of mercy.

Instruction Notebook 307 by Brother François includes a list of statements about Saint John the Evangelist – almost certainly coming from Father Champagnat³⁵ – which, among other things, describe him as the first Marist:

II. Apostle, love, oracle. Evangelist of the Incarnate Word's divinity.

First Marist, elder, model of Mary's children. Purity, generosity, tenderness. Virgin disciple, Virgin Mother. Vocation, leaving the nets behind, father, etc. Renunciation, world, property, pleasures.

Jesus and Mary have chosen us, and called us to their Society.

Union with Jesus, follow instructions, examples: Tabor, upper room, garden. Calvary. Beloved disciple, loving. The testament of Jesus on the Cross. Charity, zeal for the neighbor: epistle, Gospel, preaching, guiding. Love of Mary, angelic virtue, respect, dedication, demeanor.

We are the disciples that Jesus and Mary have loved. Crib, cross, sacraments, religious life, etc.

What a payoff!

(Croiset, *Christian year*, December 26 - August 3 - December 27 - May 6)³⁶

These texts and a few others show the importance of Saint John the Evangelist in the first spirituality of the Institute, which seems to have been later neglected.

³⁴ In 1689 he published a booklet on the devotion to Saint John the Evangelist, which was reissued in 1697, 1702, 1716, and 1834.

³⁵ The telegraphic style shows that these are notes taken by a Brother during an oral instruction. The document must have been handed to Brother François after the death of Father Champagnat.

³⁶ Probably a late reference.

THE SEAL OF Br COURVEILLE

One of the first visual images of the Society of Mary

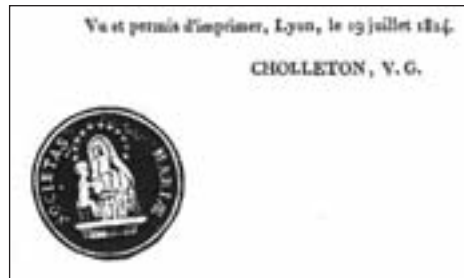


Br André Lanfrey

Among the articles contained in this issue of Marist Notebooks, there is one in particular in which I referred to the relationship between Fr. Moine, a parish priest, and Fr. Courveille. From the years 1824-1829, the Courveille tried to promote his view of the Society of Mary, in both Charlieu and later in Saint-Antoine-l'Abbaye. One of the clues of his intentions lies in the use of his personal seal found on three documents that we still have. The first of these is found on the letterhead of a communication he sent from Aiguebelle on June 4th, 1826 soon after he left the Hermitage at the end of May, (OM1/152).

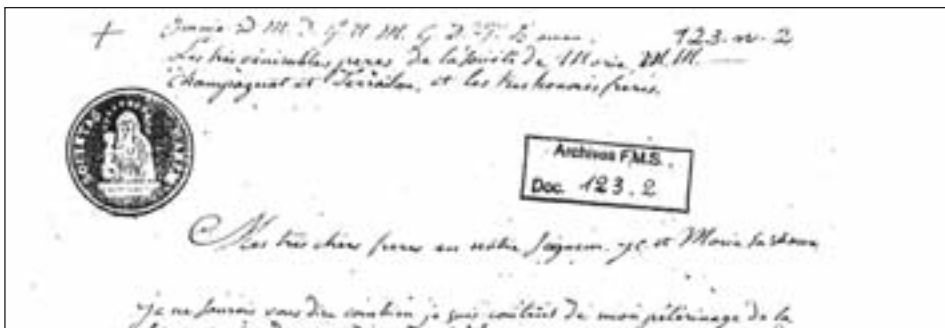
Origines Maristes describes it as follows:

"Poorly executed emblem of Mary with Child with the words: Societas Mariae



Emblem of M. Courveille

The same emblem appeared on a brochure describing the overall plan of the Little Brothers of Mary and has been preserved in the diocesan archives of Grenoble. However in this case, the emblem appears at the end of the subject matter rather than at the beginning. In my research I have found another such brochure in the



Other emblem of M. Courveille-Cholleton

diocesan archives of Chambéry where the emblem found at the same location as the one found in Grenoble.

Apparently, Fr. Courveille did not use it prior to June of 1826, nor does the Hermitage appear to have used one at that time. Furthermore, the primitive design of Father Courveille's seal suggests that it was hastily made by someone without much experience making such things. It was made somewhere during Fr. Courveille's journey from the Hermitage to Aiguebelle, or perhaps during his stay at the abbey.

By placing this seal at the top of his letter from Aiguebelle rather than at the end, Fr. Courveille wanted to indicate that even though he was far away, he continued to be Superior of "the true Society of Mary" (§ 13). Furthermore, his letter took the tone of a pastoral exhortation beginning with the words associated to the words of the seal: "My very dear Brothers in our Lord, Jesus Christ and in Mary, his Holy Mother." Upon leaving the Trappist monastery at Aiguebelle on June 11, 1826, the Abbot sent him a letter of spiritual support, addressing him rather surprisingly as: "To Fr. Courveille, Superior General of the Venerable Marist Brothers" (OM1/153).

Shortly after Fr. Courveille arrived at Chambéry on July 19, 1826, Bishop Bigex, granted him a *celebret* "... for the length of his stay in the diocese of

Chambéry". The prospectus of the Hermitage which has been preserved in its archives sheds light on the matter. This document is significant because in its conclusion it refers to Fr. Courveille as being the "P.S.G.L", a somewhat mystifying reference, possibly meaning "Patrum Superior Generalis Lugdunensium" (see OM1/p.327). Undoubtedly the Trappist Abbot had seen a copy of the same prospectus from the Hermitage, and to some extent it would explain why he addressed his letter: "To the Superior General of the Venerable Marist Brothers". As Brother Jean-Marie Granjon had been with him for a few weeks in 1822, the Abbot must have known the Little Brothers of Mary under the popularly used title for them, and which appears here in written form for the first time.¹ The fact that he did not refer to Fr. Courveille as Superior of the Society of Mary may be due to two reasons: either he had made use of a prospectus of the Hermitage on which Fr. Courveille's seal did not appear, or he wished to avoid saying anything about a Society that Fr. Courveille had described but about which he had no further information.

Whatever the case may be, the prospectus provided Father Courveille with the opportunity to put himself forward as head of the Little Brothers of Mary and as he sought to establish a branch of the Society in dioceses outside that of Lyon. Though Fr. Courveille's efforts proved to be in vain in Chambéry, he met with

¹ The prospectus is entitled: "The Foundation of the Little Brothers of Mary".

some success in the Diocese of Grenoble, where for a time he was able to establish a Society of Mary between 1827 and 1829 in the former Saint-Antoine-l'Abbaye and which included brothers, priests, and sisters.

When Fr. Courveille left the Hermitage in May of 1826, he considered what was happening there to be an aberration of the Society of Mary that he envisaged. The letter he wrote from Aiguebelle was quite clear on this. The fact that when he left, he took with him in his luggage a number of copies of the prospectus of the Society indicates that he intended to revise them so that they would be more in keeping with his objectives and his authority. This casts doubt on his stated intention, in his letter of 1826, to enter the Trappist monastery. Rather, the situation implies that if he were not re-admitted to the Hermitage, he would then be free to create “the true Society of Mary” following the model used in monasteries where the abbot enjoyed full authority. It is in this latter sense that his letter of 1826 has been interpreted. (OM3/819, § 24).

Nonetheless, of real interest is the spiritual message in Fr. Courveille’s seal. At the center, a Virgin with child is depicted with a crown of twelve stars (actually, eleven). In front of the Virgin is a Eu-

charistic table adorned on the sides by geometric by barely decipherable representations that cover the lower part of the Virgin. The entire image is encircled with the words: “*Societas Mariae*”.

A priori, this emblem is very different from the first seal used by the Society of Mary before 1840 which is, although more abstract, is rich in symbolism. Fr. Colin described it as follows: “Our early seal centered on an *Ave Maria* supported by two flowering branches and crowned with a series of stars encircled with the words *Societas Mariae*”² In fact, the seal is a little more complex than this. The letters AM at the center are interlaced. Above lies a sort of cloud or jewel, of some sort, enclosing five stars that suggest its being a crown. On the sides of the AM lie a stem of lilies to the left, and roses to the right, evoking Mary Immaculate and Mystical Rose. Around the periphery are the words *Societas Mariae* complemented by the moon below and on either side, a shaft of wheat and a cluster of grapes, evoking the Eucharist.



But this emblem and that of Fr. Courveille do have much in common: first in their circular form, and second in their general composition.

Primitive Seal of the Society of Mary

² OM3/819, § 140 It is depicted in OM3 as illustration # 86 between pp. 112 and 113

In both cases the focus is on Mary while the Society of Mary lies at the periphery. There are references to the Apocalypse (and the Assumption) in both cases by means of the use a crown of stars, well-defined in one case and less so in the other, and the placing of the moon at the bottom of the seal. It is, therefore, a Society that is priestly, Marian and eschatological.

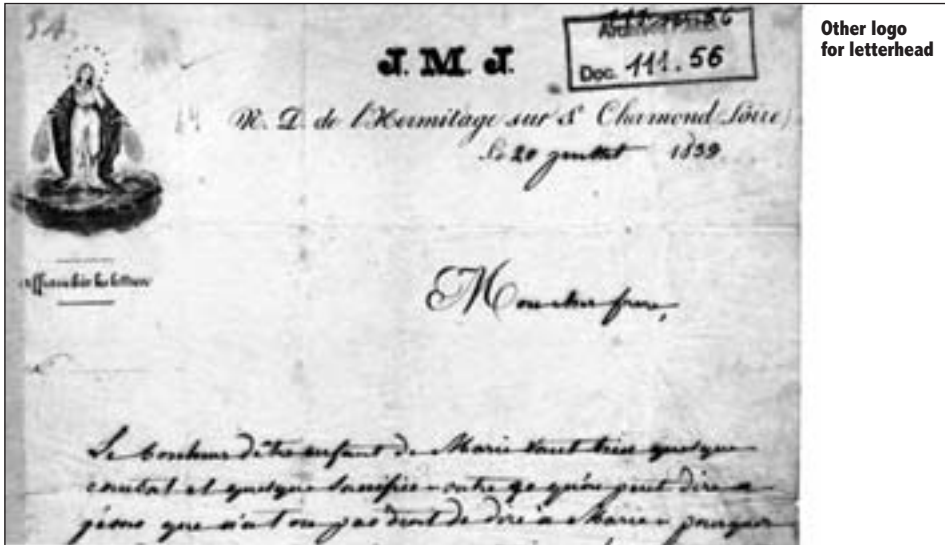
More than likely, Notre Dame de l'Hermitage never had a seal of its own prior to 1830. After that date, we find them on the letters written by Marcellin Champagnat, the first of which, as far as we know, was written to a parish priest on January 24, 1833.³

On the letterhead below Mary is represented at the center, crowned with stars and seated on a cloud, holding the Child Jesus in her left arm with his gaze is directed outwardly, gesturing with his arm in the form of a blessing; Mary makes a similar gesture with her right arm. The words: "Mary conceived without sin" appear in the form of an arch above the two, while the words: Jesus, Mary and Joseph appear below them. Written in bold letters are the words: "École normale des Frères de Marie", completed by the words: "...sur St Chamond", and the date "le...183..." The same design can be found on letters of obedience issued by Fr. Champagnat as confirmed by the letter of 10/25/1839, represen-



Logo for letterhead

³ Other stationary bearing this letterhead include 11/20/1834; 03/29/1835; 05/03/1836; 01/01/1837; 04/12/1837; 07/12/1835; 08/01/1838 and 08/28/1838



Other logo for letterhead

ted below. The design can also be found on the flyleaf of the *Rule* published in 1837.

From February 1839⁴, the letterheads appear completely different. Mary is found standing, crowned with stars, her hands extended toward the earth with the serpent under her feet. Below, in a moon shaped arc written the words: “Société des Frères de Marie”.

These letterheads are not without importance in the history of the Marist Brothers. The ones used from 1833 to 1838 show an unambiguous Marian devotion linked to the professional aspects of the undertaking. However, the Guizot Law of June 28, 1833 introduced a distinction between a what

would be regarded as an *école normale* (supported by the State), and a novitiate (supported by religious communities). For that reason, the term *école normale* [i.e. teachers college] no longer appeared on letterheads beginning in 1839.



Marian symbol in the altar of the Chapel in the Hermitage

⁴ Cf. letters of: 02/07/1839; from February 23; from March 23, from July 20 & 21; from July 1839; from October 25 and from November 6, 1839

It is possible that the redesigned emblem drew its inspiration from the Miraculous Medal.⁵ Above all, there was a desire to indicate that a new day had dawned for N.D. de l'Hermitage which was now the home of a religious society under the protection of Mary Immaculate.

It is worth observing also that the coat of arms decorating the new altar of the chapel at the Hermitage designed in 1836 was not without connection to the seal of the Society of Mary. The unique shape of the letters prefigures the baroque style Marist AM crowned with stars that became settled between 1869 and 1870.

To summarize, Fr. Courveille was the first to give graphic expression to

the Society of Mary. He did so in 1826 while still at the Hermitage. Some ten years later, the Marist Fathers independently introduced their own emblem. It was not developed from the one of Fr. Courveille, but there are significant similarities. As early as 1833, a similar design emerged at the Hermitage. Although this was different in style, it was nonetheless similar in the message it conveyed, yet with no direct reference to the Society of Mary. It was not until 1839 that claim was made to the title: "Société des Frères de Marie".

Finally, the most significant connection among all of these designs is the crown of stars evoking Mary as the Woman of the Apocalypse and sovereign Queen of the Society.

⁵ Apparitions to Catherine Labouré in 1830.

THE DEATH OF BENOÎT-JOSEPH CHAMPAGNAT AT THE AGE OF 13 IN 1803

A focal point for a reinterpretation of the childhood of Marcellin Champagnat



Br André Lanfrey

At the time of the publication of the *Life of Marcellin Champagnat* in 1856, an understanding of the composition of the Champagnat family was quite fragmentary. Brother Jean-Baptiste identified six children of Jean-Baptiste Champagnat and Marie-Thérèse Chirat with Marcellin being the youngest. In the *Annales de l'Institut* begun in 1884, we find that after having consulted the baptismal records of the pa-

rish in Marlhès, Brother Avit listed ten children in the Champagnat household with Marcellin being the second last. Brother André Bardyn lived in Marlhès for quite some time. His research into the Champagnat family, published in *Marlhès au long des siècles* (191 pages)¹, completes and corrects that of Brother Avit. The following outline is based upon the findings of both sources.

First Name	DOB	Marriage	Children	Death	Age
1. Marianne	12/11/1775	02/5/1799 (Benoît Arnaud)	8	06/29/1816 ²	41
2. Jean Barthélemy	03/27/1777	10/20/1811 (Marie Clermondon)	8	01/20/01/1838	61
3. Anne-Marie	02/20/1779	02/08/1804 (Jean Lachal or Lachau)	7	03/28/1835	56
4. Jean-Baptiste (same first name as his father)	09/11/1780		20 Thermidor Year 11	08/08/1803	23
5. Marguerite-Rose	02/20/1782			infant death	0
6. Marguerite-Rose	08/01/1784	03/01/1813 (Guillaume Cheynet)	6	04/13/1829	45
7. Anne-Marie	07/25/1786			infant death	0
8. Jean-Pierre	09/26/1787	02/17/1813 (Jeanne-Marie Ravel)	9	11/16/1833	46
9. Marcellin-Joseph-Benoît	05/20/1789	priestly ordination July 22, 1816		06/06/1840	51
10. Joseph Benoît	10/27/1790			12/20/1803 28 Frimaire Year 13	13

¹ Published by the association of « Amis de Marlhès » (amimarlhès@fr.st) in 2002

² Bro. Avit specified her death as being in 1817 (*Annales*, § 32. p.8)

It is, therefore, a rather typical family, not unusual during the time of the *Ancien Régime*: two cases of infant death (before 1 year of age), one during adolescence, another as a young adult, and only one of the remaining children reaching his sixties. Leaving aside the two infant deaths, the average age at the time of death was 42.

Among the various findings, one that has not been sufficiently taken into account is the death of the last family member, Joseph-Benoît, not during infancy as was long believed in the Institute, but at age 13. The basis on which Br. André Bardyn established his findings is well-founded: the parish priest, Fr. Alliot entered in the parish burial register for the year 1803 that: "Benoît-Joseph Champagnat, age 13, died in le Roset on Xbre, 1803".

On the same page of the register, the death of two other family members was recorded. That of Jean-Baptiste, the son, has a discrepancy. In the "État-civil", which at the time still used the Revolutionary calendar to record dates, Brother André Bardyn, found the death to be on 20 Thermidor of Year 11 (August 8, 1803). The parish priest on the other hand seems to have vacillated between two dates: September 21, and some other date in September, perhaps the third. This surprising discrepancy between the "État-civil" and the parish register could be due to a delay on the part of

the pastor in keeping the records up to date. As for Jean-Baptiste, the father, who died on June 12, 1804 when he was "approximately 50 years of age", records indicate that there is a slight difference there as well: the "État-civil" indicates that he died on 24 Pairial, Year 13, namely June 13, 1804 at ten o'clock in the morning, whereas Fr. Alliot, the pastor, registered the date as June 12, no doubt referring to the time he administered the sacrament of the sick shortly before he died.

Let us go back to the matter of Benoît-Joseph Champagnat as we try to understand why so little is known about him even though he lived to reach his teenage years.³ By telling us that of the ten Champagnat children, four had died prior to 1804, which is true, Brother Avit (*Annales* §31 p.8), could have inadvertently have us believe that all four had died at a very young age. While focusing his attention on those who survived and providing us with a detailed *curriculum vitae* for them (*Annales* §32-34 pp.8-9), he omitted the dates of those who died beforehand.

The omission of Benoît-Joseph Champagnat may also have been due to two other factors. First of all, his death was not recorded in the "État-civil" of 1803. If the date of death as recorded by Fr. Alliot is correct, it should have been recorded in the "État-civil" as 28 Frimaire, Year 13. I

³ In his « Les années obscures de Marcellin Champagnat », Bro. Gabriel Michel mentions his death at age 13 without elaboration

personally have gone through the “État-civil” beginning with the first entry of a death on 30 Brumaire Year 2 (November 20, 1792) until 1812. No report of Benoît-Joseph Champagnat was ever recorded.

The second reason for this apparent oversight is the fact that in the written and oral tradition of the Institute, no mention was ever made of the fact that Marcellin Champagnat’s entire childhood much of his teenage years were spent under the same roof of one of his siblings who was not much younger than he was. Evidently, Fr. Champagnat disclosed very little information to the Brothers about his family life, his childhood and his teenage years. The only way Marist sources can help us to reconstruct what actually happened is to glean from them the few personal anecdotes he shared during the course of his instructions – for example, the story about the brutality of one teacher that so outraged him. Another source of information is from reports shared after his death. Having so often stressed the importance of detachment from one’s family, Fr. Champagnat felt it his duty to promote discretion in this regard by leading by example.

These considerations, however, do not explain why the death of Joseph-Benoît Champagnat was not recorded in the “État-civil”. Undoubtedly some omissions could have oc-

curred during the process of passing on parish records to those responsible for the non-clerical “État-civil” but that took place between 1792 and 1793. Furthermore, the omission could hardly have been due to competing systems of record-keeping; to say the very least, Jean-Baptiste Champagnat, father, could scarcely have been included among those who resisted the New Régime. Also, it is difficult to understand why Fr. Alliot as pastor, would have indicated a fictitious time of death, or one that occurred at a later date.

Furthermore, in *Les années obscures de Marcellin Champagnat 1789-1800*,⁴ Br. Gabriel Michel recounts that when the city of Lyon revolted against the Republic from May to October, 1793, Jean-Baptiste Champagnat joined a contingency laying siege to the city. Without citing the source of his information, he added that J.B. Champagnat was included on a list of fathers heading their households who were called into service. Next to his name the report specifically recorded the words: “A wife and eight children”. This would indicate that in 1793, Benoît Joseph was still living.

We have noted that the death of Jean-Baptiste Champagnat, son, at age 23, presented a problem because of the strange date. As for Benoît-Joseph, Fr. Alliot, the pastor, cu-

⁴ Cahier A4 published in Rome approximately in the year 2,000, see p.67. He specified that he made use of an unofficial source.

riously enough revised his entry several times. After having recorded the name “Benoît Champagnat”, just above it he added the word “Joseph”. More importantly, when recording his age, he hesitatingly wrote: “10”. But, as the “3”, which he wrote over the “0”, looked like a “9”, he placed a “3” above what he had written. This leaves us with the impression that the pastor did not know who the child was, even though he would have been at the age to make his first Holy Communion.

I am therefore inclined to think that Benoît-Joseph Champagnat was a child with a mental disability, never left the household and never interacted with outsiders. As the “État-civil” did not exist at the time of his birth in 1790, there was no need to record the date of his death. Correspondingly, this child had been baptized, and raised in the Church, from which it follows that a civil acknowledgement of a religious burial was not deemed necessary.

The account of the evolution of Marcellin Champagnat’s vocation as described in *Life of Marcellin Champagnat*, (Ch. 2, p. 10-11), can in some way support the hypothesis of a disabled child. To the priest-recruiter who was looking for boys to learn Latin, Fr. Allrot recommended the boys in the Champagnat household because they seemed to be rather reserved.

Upon entering the Champagnat home, the priest spoke to their father of his “fine, pious and self-effacing boys”. Then, in progression, they filed by beginning with the eldest (assumedly Jean-Barthélemy), who declined the offer to learn Latin. He was followed by “the youngest (Jean-Pierre) and little Marcellin”. As there was no mention of Jean-Baptiste, son, who died on August 8, 1803, the visit would have taken place sometime after his death. Furthermore, the visiting priest certainly must have taken advantage of the school holidays prior to All Saints Day, which would mean that at the time of his visit, Benoît-Joseph was still living and would have been of age for early secondary education since he died only in December. However, there is no mention of him in the narration as if formal education was never considered in his regard.

One must certainly look upon the narrative with a degree of caution for Br. Jean-Baptiste’s primary objective was to edify, rather than to be rigorously historical.⁵ His account is not corroborated by other reliable resources. The fact remains that Br. Jean-Baptiste recalled only three Champagnat boys and that Marcellin was presented as being the youngest even though he had a brother who was born after him and who was still living at the time.

⁵ There are some questionable elements in the interview with Jean-Barthélemy who was 26 at the time.

There is yet another surprising turn of events in this narrative, and that is the sending of a seminary recruiter by the pastor, Fr. Alliot into the household of an avid supporter of the Revolution. In his *Annales* (V.1 pp.9-13, §36-4), Br. Avit records the recollections of some senior citizens of Marlhès concerning his longtime political involvement which Brother Gabriel Michel corroborated in his *Les années obscures de M. Champagnat*.

By 1803, this support for the Revolution soon came to an end. Champagnat continued to sign the municipal register record until 16 Floréal year 8 (May 8, 1800)⁶. His final entries in the “État-civil” were as follows:

- Births: 9 Pluviose, year 8 (January 28, 1800)
- Marriages: 10 Floréal, year 8 (April 22, 1800)
- Deaths: 5 Fructidor, year 8, (August 22, 1800)

Jean-Baptiste Courbon was named mayor by the prefect on September 4, 1800, and Jean-Baptiste Champagnat was a member of the new council whose responsibilities were much reduced.⁷ That was because the new Consulate required nothing more of people other than obeying and allowing themselves to be governed by a watchful authority.

To a large extent, weary of political turmoil during the Revolution, people readily accepted this form of government up until 1810. In any case, J.B. Champagnat did not affix his signature to the commune deliberations of May 19 1803 without leaving us an explanation for this omission. It was soon after, that the recruiter for the seminary of Verrières visited the Champagnat household. The visitation took place in the wake of the solemn agreement proclaimed on April 18, 1802. The reorganization of the Church in France was at its height, and doubts that citizens had about the peaceful intentions of the First Consul (Napoleon) on religious matters were being raised.

In Marlhès, religious harmony was not as affected by the conflicts as much as in other areas: rivalry between the priests who had adhered to the Civil Constitution and those who had not. By contrast, the authority of Fr. Alliot had been enhanced by the trials of the Revolution. In the political field, plans of a restoration of the King had faded and no longer was there fear of another White Terror like that of 1795-96. Does that mean that everything was peaceful? What is more likely is that the Revolution left traces of bitterness and frustration, and some personal rela-

⁶ As he was president of the combined cantons of Marlhès-Jonzieux.

⁷ From September 30, 1800 to September 18, 1808, only 10 meetings were held, most of which were of questionable importance. The total number of decisions rendered during this period of 8 years filled 9 pages. Surprisingly, by way of contrast with the period before, the register of public records beginning on June 2, 1701 and ending on the 16 Floréal, year 8 (March 2, 1800) filled 359 pages extending over a period of less than 9 years.

tionships were awkwardly tense. Furthermore, when Brother Avit did some research on Jean-Baptiste Champagnat several years later, and gathered a number of testimonials left about him, they left no doubt concerning the fervent Jacobin inclinations that he held.

The hypothesis of a certain ostracizing of the Champagnat family is not without some merit. Its members may also have felt a certain reserve because of unresolved family issues. A further consideration is the fact that the attempt of Jean-Baptiste, father, to move up the social ladder by using a political position ended in failure. While the family was not poor, its financial situation was somewhat precarious. When Marcellin refused to return to school, was it because of the harsh treatment given by a teacher to a student or was it rather because he tried to avoid being humiliated by other students? Furthermore, the reason why he did not want to return to school was not because he did not want to learn; he demonstrated his willingness to learn by suddenly deciding to return to school. The real reason was because he felt ill at ease in that environment. While it is true that the Church, specifically in its seminaries, had returned to being one of the important means for someone to advance in life, how could anyone dream of entering the priesthood if the head of his family was on the wrong side of recent political history, and had only limited financial resources? That is why, for a time, Marcellin aspired to

nothing beyond leading the humble life of a peasant.

The one person who had the moral authority to defuse this situation was the pastor, Fr. Alliot. By sending a seminary recruiter to the Champagnat household, he created an opportunity for socio-religious reconciliation, and opened the door for seeking further education. It was a chance that not only could Marcellin seize, but the entire family. That is why, despite the many personal and family challenges he faced – the death of his father, for example – it was a once in a lifetime opportunity. Like many vocational paths at that time, in 1803 Marcellin's was still unclear, not only for him personally, but also for his family and parish.

In 1818, Fr. Alliot asked Fr. Champagnat to send him some Brothers. The request came at a time when there were few Brothers, they were still very young, and with little formation. Fr. Champagnat nevertheless sent him two Brothers in recognition for what he owed the pastor for giving him a new freedom and a new beginning through the education he received. In founding the Brothers, Marcellin would continue to do to others what was done for him.

The death of the youngest the Champagnats, who did not die as a baby but lived until December of 1803 when he was thirteen years of age, has led me to hypothesize that he must have been a child with a disability. And this problem has drawn

me to consider the sense of liberation that Marcellin's offered him. He was the son of a Jacobin sympathizer within the context of a post-revolutionary ambiance that would have been constricting for him. Finally, Father Champagnat's great compassion toward the sick and his assertion that

they were a blessing for a household perhaps had their source in his closeness to a brother who suffered with a disability. However, it would be necessary to examine more closely information concerning Father Champagnat's interaction with the sick and the infirm.

ANNEX

EXCERPTS FROM THE PARISH REGISTER IN MARLHES



Extrait registre paroissial de Marlhes

- Line 3:** « Jean Baptiste Champagnat, age 23, died in le Rozet the 7th »: added above the line: « 21 sep (tembre) 1803 »; and below the line: « 3 (?) sep(tembre) 1803 ».
- Line 14:** « Benoît (above, « joseph ») Champagnat age 10 (corrected « 13 ») year deceased in le Rozet, 20 Xbre 1803 »
- Line 28:** « Jean-Baptiste Champagnat approximate age 50, died in le Rozet June 12, 1804 ».

THE BROTHERS' PROMISE OF 1826

As primitive statutes for the Brothers' branch of the Society of Mary



Br André Lanfrey

Much has been said recently about the Pledge of July 23, 1816. I believe it is now opportune to recall a similar document from the branch of the Brothers, that is, the "Promise", of which there are two

versions: the first is dated 1826 (OM1/168), and the second was included in the *Life* of 1856 (chapter 11, p. 157-158), "written by the hand of the pious Founder", Brother Jean-Baptiste tells us:

Promise of 1826 (OM1/168)	Life, Chapter 15, p.157
<p>We, the undersigned, for the greater glory of God and the honor of the august Mary, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, certify and assure that we consecrate ourselves for five years from this day of eighteen hundred and twenty-six, freely and very willingly, to the pious association of those who consecrate themselves, under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to the Christian instruction of rural children.</p>	<p><i>All for the greater glory of God and the honor of the august Virgin Mary, Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ.</i> <i>We, the undersigned, certify and declare that we freely and willingly consecrate ourselves to God, for five years, beginning from this day, in the little association of the Little Brothers of Mary. We do so in order to work unceasingly, through the practice of all virtues, at our sanctification and at the Christian education of rural children.</i></p>
<p>We intend: First, to seek only the glory of God, the good of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church, and the honor of the august Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ.</p>	<p><i>We therefore intend:</i> <i>1. To seek only the glory of God, the honor of the august Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the welfare of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church.</i></p>
<p>Second, we commit to teach gratuitously the needy that the local parish priest will present to us: 1 catechism, 2 prayer, 3 reading, respect for the ministers of Jesus Christ, obedience to their parents and legitimate monarchs.</p>	<p><i>2. To undertake to teach gratuitously, all the needy children whom the parish priest may send us; to instruct them and all the other children confided to us, in catechism, prayers, reading, writing, and the other branches of primary instruction, according to their needs.</i></p>

Third, we commit ourselves to obey our Superior – and those who his authority will indicate to us – without question.	3. We undertake to obey without question our Superior and all those who are appointed by him to lead us.
<i>Fourth, we promise to keep chastity.</i>	4. <i>To observe chastity, according to our promise.</i>
Fifth, we will share everything in community.	5. To share in community, everything we have.

In 1978, Brother Alexandre Balko did a critical analysis of these documents¹, showing that they are not a profession formula but a collective “contract of commitment” as an association of Christian teachers, and in accordance with the spirit of the Society of Mary. The version of 1826 is certainly the older because the name “Little Brothers of Mary” did not yet formally exist (see first paragraph), even though the title had been used since 1824². Because the version of Brother Jean-Baptiste dated 1856 does not change anything essential, the text of 1826 was a final version. But we can still ask three questions about this foundational document: when was it written, what stages led to its development and, most of all, what is its real nature? Would it not be a first ‘constitution’ for the branch of the Brothers?

1. THE COLLECTIVE PROMISE AND THOSE MADE INDIVIDUALLY

The essential source regarding the history of this promise is the beginning of chapter 15 of the Life of the Founder (pp. 157-158), in which Brother Jean-Baptiste focuses on the introduction of the vows in 1826. According to him, the promise “contained in principle all the obligations of religious life”, and therefore was nothing else than an anticipation of formal vows. But it is not that simple, since vows are individual commitments while the promise is a collective engagement: “We, the undersigned...”

Elsewhere in the book, however, Brother Jean-Baptiste clearly refers to early individual promises. For example: “From the very beginning of the Institute the Brothers were required to make promises of fidelity to God and to their vocation” (chapter 15, p. 157). And then he indicates that “each Brother signed this promise, kneeling in the presence of the assembled Community” (p. 158). He seems to combine two different

¹ “Promise of the First Brothers”, in FMS 1978, No. 31, p. 412, and No. 32, p. 424.

² The “prospectus” used the expression “Little Brothers of Mary” for the first time.

“promises”: a collective one, which is known to us, and an individual one referring “to God and to their vocation”, which was part of the rite of entry to the association, including the signing of a document and the taking of the habit. This rite dates back to the end of March 1817, when Jean-Marie Granjon and Jean-Baptiste Audras (Brother Louis) took the habit.

2. BROTHER LOUIS AND THE ORIGIN OF THE COLLECTIVE PROMISE

Regarding the origin of the collective “Promise”, we have two very similar stories about how Brother Louis opposed it, one in the *Life* (p. 158), and the other in *Our Models in Religion – Biographies of Some Brothers* (p. 11):

Life (Chapter 15, page 158)	Biography of Brother LouisAfte
<p>Each Brother signed this promise, kneeling in the presence of the assembled Community. Obviously, it contains, in principle, all the obligations of religious life, a fact which Father Champagnat was careful to point out to the Brothers, before he allowed them to make it.</p>	<p>two years of novitiate, in order to avoid human inconstancy and stabilize the vocation of the first Brothers, he [Marcellin] proposed to make before God a promise of fidelity. By this promise, the Brothers committed to work in their sanctification, instruct children, especially the poor, obey their superior, keep chastity, and share everything in community.</p>
<p>When this promise was first proposed to the Brothers in 1818, Brother Louis – whose conscience was extremely timorous, and who rightly observed with scrupulosity whatever he promised God – was daunted by the obligations which were to be contracted, and refused to sign. This was despite the advice of Father Champagnat and the friendly encouragement of the other Brothers.</p>	<p>When this promise was first proposed to the Brothers in 1818, Brother Louis – whose conscience was extremely timorous, and who rightly observed with scrupulosity whatever he promised God – was daunted by the obligations which were to be contracted, and refused to sign. This was despite the advice of Father Champagnat and the friendly encouragement of the other Brothers.</p>

The biography of Brother Louis, certainly written before *The Life*³, clearly states that the full collective “promise” was proposed to the Brothers at the end of 1818, certainly during a retreat session, when their

association – began on January 2, 1817 – was not two years old yet, and had very few members⁴. In addition, it was already the full text of 1826, not a first short version of it. I initially thought that Brother Jean-Baptiste

³ He died in 1847, and Brother Jean-Baptiste used the previous biography.

⁴ Although our sources have certainly not registered all the Brothers of the beginnings.

was keen to show that the practice of religious virtues (obedience and so on) was there from the start, and that therefore we needed to imagine a more gradual development of the collective promise. I had dated its final drafting not before the end of 1819, when Father Champagnat structured his community by electing a Director and establishing an early religious rule, then coming to live with the Brothers (*Life*, Chapter 6, pp.69-70).

But two elements made me change my interpretation: the clear dating of the event⁵, and above all the coincidence between the date of Brother Louis' resistance and his being sent to Marllhes at the end of that same year or at the beginning of 1819, as well as the moving of his brother (Laurent Audras) to Le Bessat, probably that same year. In short, both Audras brothers distanced themselves from the association's home base in La Valla.

However, the bridges were not broken, as Brother Jean-Baptiste tell us (*Life*, p. 158) through a conversation between Brother Jean-Marie Granjon and Father Champagnat. The Brother was "scandalized" by the opposition, while Father Champagnat had a patient attitude: "He [Brother Louis] will sign in due course". This dialogue also shows who the two promoters of the collective promise were, one of whom

seemed rather intransigent, while the other was more accommodating. From 1818 to 1819, the association thus included two forms of commitment. And the process of assent to the collective promise of 1818 concluded at the retreat session of 1819 with the appointment of Jean-Marie Granjon as Director of La Valla, after which Father Champagnat moved in with the Bothers. The two Audras brothers finally accepted this change, but others probably left the group. Under the leadership of the Champagnat-Granjon duo, the primitive association was geared towards a religious community after a year-long period of crisis, and also of reflection

3.A PRIMITIVE "RULE" FROM 1817?

Between 1818 and 1819, the distancing without leaving the association on the part of Brother Louis – and probably of his brother Laurent as well – can only be understood as an expression of attachment to a first "rule" of the association that the project of 1818 did not actually cancel. There was clear continuity from one to the other, since Brother Louis did not question his belonging to the association for five years, but the obligations that the new model was imposing, that is, the promises of obedience, chastity and sharing of

⁵ Which implies that Brother Jean-Baptiste collected a precise testimony, probably from Brother Louis himself.

goods. Brother Jean-Baptiste stated that “Brother Louis [...] was daunted by the obligations which were to be contracted” because he realized that they changed the nature of the association.

There was hence a first stage of this collective promise, the beginning of which can be dated to late March 1817. Indeed, it is unlikely that a written founding “rule” existed when Jean-Marie Granjon and Jean-Baptiste Audras first gathered in community on January 2, 1817. But the taking of the habit in March that year implied a collective “rule” as a basis for the individual commitments. So I assume that a moral contract was drawn up between January and March 1817, and formulated as follows:

We, the undersigned, for the greater glory of God and the honor of the august Mary, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, certify and assure that we consecrate ourselves for five years from this day of ..., freely and very willingly, to the pious association of those who consecrate themselves, under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to the Christian instruction of country children. We intend:

First, to seek only the glory of God, the good of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church, and the honor of the august Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Second, we commit to teach gratuitously the needy that the local parish priest will present to us:

1 catechism, 2 prayer, 3 reading, respect for the ministers of Jesus Christ, obedience to their parents and legitimate rulers.

There is strong coherence in this text. An initial general statement of intent is followed by two articles clarifying a fundamental obligation: selfless teaching of the Christian doctrine. And that is exactly what Brother Jean-Baptiste said: “fidelity to God and to their vocation”.

It is true that the Association was not carrying out any charitable or catechetical activities yet, but we know that it was shortly after this that Brother Jean-Marie Granjon began to gather children to catechize and feed them, and that catechizing began in the hamlets. Moreover, Father Champagnat had not gathered followers to lead a contemplative life, but for the apostolate, which was to be done only for the glory of God, and therefore without any salary. It was to be free for poor children⁶, respectful of the authority of the parish priest. It was not yet project focused on schooling per se: learning to read was normally part of the catechism lessons. However, there was only a thin line between school and catechism. And although the formula “for the glory of God and the honor of Mary” recalls the pledge of Fourvière, we do not know for certain if the first two Brothers explicitly knew about the Society of Mary as a project: that is probably why the association was poorly defined in the “promise”, which neither mentioned the “Society of Mary” nor the “Brothers of Mary”.

⁶ Which means that children from families with some income did pay.

4. A PROBABLE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

This would give us a rather tight timeline regarding the development of the Brothers' collective contract:

1. Jean-Marie Granjon and Jean-Baptiste Audras gathered in community on January 2, 1817, without an explicit 'contract' but with the idea of forming a parish apostolic community under Father Champagnat's direction.
2. Drafting of the initial part of the collective contract around March 1817, which was observed between 1817 and 1818.
3. Father Champagnat and Brother Jean-Marie Granjon proposed the promises of obedience, chastity, and poverty at the end of 1818.
4. From the end of 1818 to the end of 1819, division of the group (La Valla, Marthes, Le Bessat), Brother Louis being the main opposition figure.
5. At the end of 1819, agreement on the proposal of 1818, according to which the association became more conventual and less attached to a single place, under the leadership of the Champagnat-Granjon duo.

In any case, we do not have the actual text of these foundational statutes of the Marist Brothers prior to 1826, and the timeline described above is essentially based on Brother Jean-Baptiste's testimony. On the other hand, the question of the individual promise, which was certainly different from the collective contract, remains open.

5. IMPORTANCE OF MANUSCRIPT 302 BY BROTHER FRANÇOIS

Brother François helps us to answer these questions in part. In his first retreat notebook (A.F.M. 5101.302), which he started writing during the community retreat of 1819⁷, Brother François – who goes on to the habit to make a personal commitment – mixes reflections, personal resolutions and specific references to the collective and personal promises he was to make:

[1] In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, so be it!

O very Holy Trinity (Saint Francis Xavier)!

All to the greater glory of God and the honor of the august Mary!

First retreat, 1819 (Father Champagnat)

I will be mindful of the presence of God while praying, teaching, walking, taking breaks, meals, and will act with holy modesty in every occasion **for the glory of God, the honor of Mary, and the good of**

⁷ Which took place in the room that eventually became Father Champagnat's.

Religion. I will teach children respect, love, and obedience to their parents and to their superiors, and mainly catechism and prayer.

[2] I will always follow the example of Jesus, Mary and the Saints (1820).

I will act consequently, I will teach by following the example of Jesus, my master and model (act. 1)".

In 1822 he added:

"Never commit any sin whatsoever deliberately, but carefully avoid them all.

Living as if it is possible to die at any moment, as being ready to die, as being about to die, and as being already dead, show me these different states before God. Such thinking offers reassurance against any surprises from death, give confidence and fervor, and fill the soul with consolation and joy (Judde, Retreat Guide, T.V., p. 179).

Seek only the glory of God, the honor of Mary, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the good of the holy Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church, according to the purpose of the Order (Judde, Religious Retreat, 4th day, 1st meditation, T. 3)⁸.

Obey my Superior – and those who his authority will indicate to me – without question, as if Jesus Christ in person commanded me.

Asking myself often: Ad quid venisti?

[Why are you here?].

I will speak always with seriousness, prudence and kindness to children and to the Brothers, or to any other person whatsoever, and whenever

I experience disaffection from anyone, I will not say or do anything before peace comes back to me".

Convergence between Brother François and later “promises”

Brother François (Manuscript 302, 1819, 1822)	Promise of 1826 (OM1/168)	Life, chapter 11, p. 157
[1] In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, so be it!		
O very Holy Trinity (Saint Francis Xavier)!		
All for the greater glory of God and the honor of the august Mary!	We, the undersigned, for the greater glory of God and the honor of the august Mary, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ	All for the greater glory of God and the honor of the august Virgin Mary, Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁸ These references to Father Judde were added later.

<p>First retreat, 1819 (Father Champagnat)</p>		
<p>1. will be mindful of the presence of God... while praying, teaching, walking, taking breaks, meals, and will act with holy modesty in every occasion for the glory of God, the honor of Mary, and the good of Religion.</p>		
<p>2. I will teach children respect, love, and obedience to their parents and to their superiors, and mainly catechism and prayer.</p>	<p>5. Second, we commit to teach gratuitously the needy that the local parish priest will present to us: 1 catechism, 2 prayer, 3 reading, respect for the ministers of Jesus Christ, obedience to their parents and legitimate rulers.</p>	<p>2. To undertake to teach gratuitously, all the needy children whom the parish priest may send us; to instruct them and all the other children confided to us, in catechism, prayers, reading, writing, and the other branches of primary instruction, according to their needs.</p>
<p>1822</p>		
<p>Seek only the glory of God, the honor of Mary, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the good of the holy Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church, according to the purpose of the Order (Jude, Religious Retreat, 4th day, 1st meditation, T. 3).</p>	<p>4. We intend: First, to seek only the glory of God, the good of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church, and the honor of the august Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ.</p>	<p>We therefore intend to seek only the glory of God, the honor of the august Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ and the welfare of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church.</p>
<p><i>Obey my Superior - and those who his authority will indicate to me - without question, as if Jesus Christ in person commanded me...</i></p>	<p>6. Third, we commit ourselves to obey our Superior - and those who his authority will indicate to us - without question.</p>	<p>3. We undertake to obey without question our Superior and all those who are appointed by him to lead us.</p>

Therefore, thanks to Brother François, we can be sure that the “promise” of 1826 already existed from 1819 to 1822. This is no small finding. There are certainly some variations among the three versions. It is somewhat surprising that the title “Little Brothers of Mary” had not been introduced yet in 1826, but it is an early text that must be treated carefully. Brother Jean-Baptiste himself names the association (Little Brothers of Mary) and deleted the reference to legitimate ‘rulers’ [*princes*’ in French]. This deletion indicates that his text came after the revolution of 1830. Indeed, the supporters of the deposed regime considered themselves as “Legitimists”, and saw the Orléans monarchy as usurpers. It is therefore likely that the version of 1856 was edited by Marcellin shortly after 1830 to avoid any political interpretations which could have become embarrassing and even a source of conflict among the Brothers. This later version also indicates that the introduction of the vows did not significantly modify the foundational constitution of the Brothers, which retained its validity at the cost of only a few updates.

Moreover, from 1826 the first Brothers made their vows to “the superiors of the Society of Mary⁹, in accordance with its statutes and purposes”. What was the content of these statutes and purposes? Cer-

tainly, they included the Fourvière plan of 1816, but also the “promise” of 1819-26 and, without any doubt, the oral tradition, and the early practice and customs. In 1822, Brother François already spoke of “the purposes of the Order”, a formula that seemed to mean roughly the same thing. After 1836, the Brothers made their vows to Father Colin “in accordance with the constitutions and the purpose of the Order”, which undoubtedly included the statutes of their own branch that were developed between 1817 and 1819. Father Champagnat’s Spiritual Testament in 1840 was basically an update of the Order’s constitutions and purposes.

6. THE FORMULA PRONOUNCED BY EACH BROTHER

The emphasis on the founding compact of the Brothers has led us to lose sight of the matter of individual promises, which were certainly formulated in terms of consecration, not as a contract. There seem to be no documents that provide the text of this promise. However, on the assumption that the vows formula of 1826 was inspired by the original promise, I think that Brother François, who made his final vows in 1826 (**A.F.M. 5101.302**), gives us a good idea both of the vows formula and the promise:

⁹ Champagnat was clearly the Superior of the Brothers but the priests of the Hermitage had no Superior.

113. On the 11th day of the memorable month of October 1826, at the end of the retreat, I had the pleasure to receive my God, and to make the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, by which **I consecrated myself completely to God, my Father, and to Mary, my Mother, under the protection of all the angels and all the saints, particularly of my guardian angel, Saint John Francis Regis and Saint Francis Xavier**, and thanks to their merits and intercession I will hopefully obtain from God's mercy the grace of faithfully observing them until the last breath of my life.

The text of the vows formula from the Rule of 1837 is similar (part II, p. 16-17):

Prostrate at your feet, most holy and adorable Trinity, with the ardent desire to work for your glory, **in the presence of Mary, my loving Mother, of Saint Joseph and the other patron saints of the Society, of my guardian angel and my patron saints**, I voluntarily and freely make the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience in to the Superior of the Society of Mary, in accordance with the Constitutions and the purposes of the Order. O my God, I beg you to accept my vows and my devotion; and you, Mary, my tender Mother, receive me among your dear children.
Amen

We can assume that the formula of the personal promise of each Brother included an invocation to the Trinity, Mary, the guardian angels and patron saints, followed by a a five-year commitment in the association,

and concluded with a final request, which the text of Brother François shows:

“to obtain from God's mercy the grace of to observe them faithfully until the last breath of my life”.

We also find this list of intercessors at the end of Father's Champagnat Spiritual Testament (*Life*, p. 243-244):

“Be constantly faithful to the devout practice of the presence of God [...].
That a tender and filial love for our good Mother never fail you [...].
With devotion to Mary couple devotion to her noble spouse, glorious Saint Joseph [...], one of our leading patrons.
You act as guardian angels [...], so pay a special worship of love, respect and confidence to these pure spirits also”.

Rightly or wrongly, I also find a link between these two texts and the first words of the aforementioned Notebook 302 by Brother François, which, in my opinion, is a condensed version of his personal promise of 1819. It includes, indeed, the invocation to the Trinity and the patron saint, as well as the Marist motto:

[1] In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, so be it!
O most Holy Trinity (Saint Francis Xavier)!
All for the greater glory of God and the honor of the august Mary”.

7. NOT JUST A PROMISE BUT FOUNDATIONAL STATUTES OF THE BROTHERS' BRANCH

There are two dimensions to the word “promise” used by Brother Jean-Baptiste, and they are not of equal importance: first, the individual promises, the content of which I have tried to reconstruct; and, second, the foundational statutes of the Brothers’ branch which were established between 1818 and 1819, the versions of 1826 and 1856 being later adaptations. The nucleus of the declaration was defined in 1817 as a five-year commitment to an association under the name of Mary aimed at the Christian education of children. Its importance is greater because the vows,

either temporary and perpetual, were made in accordance with the “statutes and the purpose” and then the “constitutions and purposes of the Order”. We must see, above all, a fundamental link between these statutes and the Spiritual Testament of 1840.

Around 1830, when Father Bourdin began to draft a history of the origins of the Brothers (OM2/754 § 5), he was astonished by “the haste of the project”. I must admit that I felt the same astonishment when I recognized – in contrast to our conventional emphasis on Marcellin’s pragmatism – how quickly he knew that he needed to give his project a clear identity in the heart of the Society of Mary.

THE GROWTH AND DECLINE OF THE PROVINCE OF AUBENAS



Br Alain Delorme

PROTEST LETTERS FROM BROTHER PHILOGONE, ASSISTANT GENERAL FOR AUBENAS (1892) AND OF THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL (1921)

Despite the Institute's being quite centralized in the nineteenth century, its Provinces were far from being built in a uniform way. This was particularly true for the Provinces of southern France: Aubenas and Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux. According to a letter from Brother Philogone, a wise and prudent man, the General Administration's policy regarding these two Provinces – which were belatedly merged into the Institute¹, and were naturally divided by the Rhône River – was not conducted as equitably as one might expect. Eventually, the Province of Aubenas had to move beyond the territorial ghetto where it had been confined!

In 1903, it did indeed expand – although to its own disadvantage – to found the District of Pontós and the Province of Northern Brazil. But the erection of the Province of León,

Spain, in 1920 pushed it beyond its sustainable levels of replenishment, as the Provincial Council then pointed out.

By taking two key documents, we will see the fate of a Province that had an unmatched dynamism regarding vocations but that came to be treated as little more than a reservoir of personnel for the global development of the Institute.

1. BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF THE PROVINCE OF AUBENAS

- April 15, 1844: union with the Brothers of Viviers. May 3: Father Besson, chaplain, and Brother Louis-Bernardin, Provincial Director, arrive from the Hermitage.
- The Brothers of Viviers had had a difficult period of development between 1810 and 1844. At the time of the merger, they had 60 members, including seven postulants. Father Vernet, Vicar General, was their Founder.

- Labégude became the Provincial House and remained so until 1878. Poorly located on a major road, it soon became too small, and in 1878 was replaced by a large house built in Aubenas, a town situated four kilometers away.
- Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet served as Assistant for Saint-Paul and Aubenas until 1860. The Province of Aubenas was then entrusted to Brother Pascal, who remained in office only a year. Brother Philogone took over from him and directed it for 34 years (see *Marvelous Companions*, pp.132-147).
- Brother Malachie (see *Marvelous Companions*, pp.150-161) took over from Brother Bernardin at Labégude in 1848. He stated many times that Brother Jean-Baptiste, administrator of both Provinces, had sent some of the most capable Brothers from Labégude to Saint-Paul in order to set it on a solid basis. In 1861, 45 out of the 92 establishments of Saint-Paul were headed by Brothers from Labégude [called *Frères "descendus"*]. Some Brothers went also to Beaucamps. More than 300 young Brothers were sent from their native Ardèche, some of them destined to distant missions such as China.
- From 1874 to 1878, construction of the Provincial House in Aubenas. The plans were the work of Brother Philogone. Brother Louis-Marie, Superior General, despite the economic difficulties the Institute was going through, worked hard to complete this construction as it was considered a priority. He wrote in a letter dated December 8, 1873: "It is impossible to delay the novitiate of Aubenas. We will soon have 300 Brothers at the retreats in Labégude, and the house can barely accommodate a hundred. Half of them sleep on the floor in the attic, with no daylight nor ceiling, on straw mattresses that are touching one another, and which you can only reach by crawling on the floor".
- In September 1878, the novitiate of Labégude is transferred to Aubenas.
- The juniorate of Labégude opened in 1890. Until then, the Province had admitted only 15-year-old candidates, most of whom arrived directly from school. The first juniorate was founded in 1868 at the Hermitage. The opening of juniorates was due to new thinking and also the industrialization of France which opened job opportunities to young men, notably on the railways. As a result, it became necessary to 'cultivate' young vocations, between 12 and 15 years of age.
- The District of Algeria was founded in May 1891, and eventually included 18 schools. Young Brothers would carry out their mil-

itary service in Algeria (it was shorter than in France).

Behind this apparent prosperity, however, Brother Philogone identified substantial problems that endangered the very existence of the Province.

2. LETTER FROM BROTHER PHILOGONE, ASSISTANT, TO BROTHER THÉOPHANE, SUPERIOR GENERAL, DATED APRIL 8, 1892

Aubenas (Ardèche), April 8
(strictly confidential)

My Very Reverend Brother,

My correspondence for March was completed yesterday. I take the first free moment after doing so to submit a few thoughts to you regarding your kind reply about one of the three proposed ways to fund the juniorate of the Province. I would do this even more freely if I was at the end of my mandate and thus had less personal interest. But the general good is the only thing that moves me.

I have recently described to you the situation of the juniorate and the Province as it appears to me. It is for you to judge, Very Reverend Brother, if I am right. I realize that you are already doing much for the juniorate, and I cannot thank you enough. However, without more resources, it is impossible to sustain things.

Regarding my proposal for completing the Province, objections and other proposals have been presented to you. To start with, they speak about completing it partially by adding the schools of Vigan and other houses from the Department of Gard, as far as we have Brothers available to take over from those of Saint-Paul. A strange combination indeed, which Reverend Brother Bérillus has already proposed to me several times! But are doing deals among ourselves?

Does he think that I will go hunting for Brothers, from year to year, place by place?

Did we ever go about this way when forming the three Provinces the Centre [of France]?

"I would not know – he replied (Reverend Brother Bérillus) – how to carry out this dismembering without affecting the morale of the Brothers, generating opposition and protest".

Dismembering! Can you call it dismembering when it is actually a matter of bringing things back to a normal state? It would mean, at most, giving back to Aubenas some of the more-than-a-hundred Brothers who did their novitiate and got their education there.

Between you and me, only the present Assistant for Saint-Paul interprets this as dismembering.

His predecessor, Reverend Brother Nestor, had a very different opinion and seriously proposed, twelve years ago, to transfer all the schools from the Departments of Gard and Hérault to Aubenas.

Before him, Reverend Brother Jean-Baptiste reiterated many times – even during the General Council sessions attended by you, Very Reverend Brother – that "the Rhône River is the natural boundary between both Provinces, and the towns of Alais or Sommières would be a better location for the Provincial House, as it was more central".

Very Reverend Brother Louis-Marie was absolutely of the same opinion, and the house at Aubenas was built with that understanding. Two years in a row, he himself announced, publicly at the retreat, that once the house was finished, the Province was to be completed by adding places from the right bank of the Rhône.

Who could reasonably interpret as dismembering, therefore, the fact of balancing both Provinces, one of which is too big (nine Departments) and the other too small (two-thirds of a Department and one-fourth of another). "But this – he added (Brother Bérillus) – will affect the morale of the Brothers, generating opposition and protest". Why so?

In my humble opinion, this misjudges the spirit of the Brothers. Are not all the Brothers members of the same Institute? Would having an eight-day retreat in one Provincial House rather than another stop them from having the same Superior General, and following the same rules and same customs? Are they so attached to one Assistant that they could not suffer any other one? So strongly attached to a particular region that they could not establish themselves in another? Tomorrow, this Assistant [Brother Bérillus] may no longer be in this world, or may be appointed to Aubenas. And then what? If they are so attached to their place, they would be much safer if they stayed put instead of being replaced by others and never returning.

Please do not tell us silly things as if we were children to be fooled! I have no doubt about the fact that this opposition and protest are not born in the spirit of the Brothers themselves but elsewhere.

What is deeply regrettable here is that the Assistant for Saint-Paul is prejudicing the Brothers against this solution, and it is also regrettable that people disseminate and believe – based on nothing – (I was not able to read this word well) what obsesses and drives the Superior. Those in authority have nothing to gain – nor does the spirit of the Brothers – with these things, which will become a seed of disturbance. What should they think, for example, of the recommendation to avoid the Brothers from Aubenas, and look for accommodation with strangers rather than with us? Is this not fomenting disorder between two Provinces that were perfectly united in the past? We are not far from disunity even among the members of the General Council. A bit of touchiness and narrow-mindedness there. May God keep me from judging people's motives or even their zeal, but what emerges from the facts – an everyman-for-himself attitude – is clear. They do not examine things closely and, to suit themselves, they exempt themselves from due order and decorum, provided they have juniors, postulants, schools and resources. Several years back, I had to report – and was not alone – this trend to isolate the Provinces from one another. If this is allowed to continue, who will be able to centralize everything again in order re-build in the Institute the moral, religious and administrative strength that was so well established by our predecessors? Leaving this digression aside, there are two possibilities: we either want to preserve the Province of Aubenas, or we want to extinguish it. To do the latter, we only need to leave it within its present narrow limits, in both geography and resources, letting Saint-Paul continue to monopolize the Brothers.

To preserve and fortify it, we need to get the required funds to keep the juniorate going or, even better, to complete the Province, once and for all, by adding all the schools from the right bank of the Rhône River down to the Mediterranean Sea.

That would give us not a dismembering but two identical Provinces, well constituted, with the capacity to sustain a juniorate and a novitiate, to go forward without friction, and to assign Brothers appropriately, without the constant and embarrassing need to warn them about their families and acquaintances.

This is the situation that I believe I must submit to you. Do with it, in your wisdom, as you judge to be good. I want nobody else to know about this letter, although you can use its content as you consider best. May God enlighten you and Mary always help you.

As for me, I renew the deep respect and the full submission with which I have been and remain, my Very Reverend Brother, your very humble and very obedient servant.

Brother Philogone

3. COMMENT

This letter was written three years before the end of Brother Philogone's long mandate as Assistant, which began in 1861. We have the draft of this letter but not Brother Théophile's answer, although the *Historical Digest of the Province of Aubenas, 1844-1920* refers to it (cf. Annex 1). There is a form of answer in the brief note of the Circular of July 2, 1893, under the title "Sectioning":

The Brothers from the establishments of Saint-Marcel (Ardèche), Saint-Quentin, La Roque, Goudargue, Notre-Dame de la Rouvière, Saint-Hippolyte-du-Fort (Gard), Saint-Bauzille-de-Putois, and Ganges (Hérault), will go to Aubenas for their retreat, and will now be members of this Province. (cf. CSG VIII, p.331).

Did the term "sectioning" – which evokes surgery – echo the word "dis-

membering" used by Brother Bérillus, Assistant for the Province of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux? This word had been vigorously rejected by Brother Philogone – who recalled the plan proposed by Brother Nestor, Assistant for Saint-Paul, to transfer "all the schools from the Departments of Gard and Hérault to Aubenas" – and Brother Jean-Baptiste's proposal to take "the Rhône River as the natural boundary between both Provinces", not to mention the promises of Reverend Brother Louis-Marie.

Brother Bérillus, Assistant for Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, was looking for the benefit of his Province but forgetting that the novitiate of Labégude, before Aubenas, had sent more than a hundred excellent Brothers to its neighboring Province on the left bank of the Rhône, of which he was in charge. This Super-

¹ He was a junior in Serres (Hautes-Alpes) in 1890, and died in Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux on March 23, 1967.

rior's temperament undoubtedly comes through in Brother Philogone's letter, as well as in the notes by Brother Victus (Céas Paulin)², who wrote:

"They said about him [Bérillus] that he would have been a good captain of the French Dragoons" (see the Archives of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, B.85, p.8).

Brother Philogone's words, therefore, directly targeted Brother Bérillus when he spoke of "dismembering" his Province, as Saint-Paul included nine Departments and Aubenas "two-thirds of a Department [Ardèche] and one-quarter of another [Gard]". Continuing to target Brother Bérillus in a particular way, he did not hesitate to write:

"What emerges from the facts – the everything-for-me attitude – is what makes it evident. They [Brother Bérillus] do not examine things closely and, in order to keep their accommodative stance, they exempt themselves from order and composure, provided that there are juniors, postulants, schools and resources".

But Brother Philogone pushed his reflection further, denouncing the "trend to isolate the Provinces", weakening the Institute and the "moral, religious and administrative strength that was so well established by our predecessors". This was thus an implicit critique of a significant

number of Assistants, and of Reverend Brother Théophane himself. According to Brother Philogone, the times for small bargains³ had passed, and Aubenas needed a territory bordering the Rhône and arriving "down to the Mediterranean Sea".

Brother Philogone died in 1895 after 34 years of service, without seeing the fulfilment of the promises concerning the Province of which he had been a loved and wise Superior lacking the means for any international expansion. In 1903, the new Constitutions greater autonomy of the Provinces, which had been tightly controlled by the Assistants, even after the introduction of the role of Provincial (cf. Annex 2). Significantly, the processes of secularization and exile were to be catastrophic for any Province that did not have a foreign District.

It is true that, lacking sufficient local territory, the Province was expanding in Algeria, which was then considered an extension of France, given that Marseille is closer to Algiers than to Lille. But the 17 schools opened from 1891 to 1903 in the three Departments and Dioceses of Algiers, Oran and Constantine, would eventually be secularized and disappear in a few months, with the exception of two schools in Algiers.

² Reattachment of some schools from the Departments of Gard (5), Ardèche (1) and Hérault (2), schools that were to be included in the Circular of July 2, 1893 under the title "Sectioning".

4. HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE PROVINCE AFTER 1892

The *Historical Digest of the Province of Aubenas, 1844-1920* (see Annex 1) gives an overview of the situation after 1903, including the difficult foundation of Pontós in Spanish Catalonia, carried out in haste and great poverty. The Province had to give up eighty young men who returned to their families because there was no room to accommodate them. In addition,

Forty-two Brothers, most of them with good formation – 33 had Brevet Élémentaire, and five the Brevet Supérieur – were sent to the District of Cape Town (South Africa), without any other compensation to the Province of Aubenas than the clothing and travel expenses. The same number went to northern Brazil, and founded the Province of that name.

This last Foundation, carried out with some urgency, became an ongoing concern for the Province because local recruitment had to be supplemented by sending young men from France. It is telling that in 1919 the Saint Louis juniorate was opened in Ferrières-sous-Aubenas to send young people from Ardèche to Brazil, at the expense of the French schools that had to be run by secularized Brothers.

Thanks to the hard work of the Brothers, however, Pontós became a formation house, and the young Frenchmen were joined by young Spaniards. Yet, the financial situation of the Province remained precarious,

despite the foundations of León and Galicia in western Spain. In France, despite the selflessness and dedication of the Brothers, the schools barely survived due to a shortage of new vocations and scant financial resources. The correspondence between the Provincials and the Superior General and his Assistants – who moved to Grugliasco, near Turin, in 1903 – shows the difficulties they had to face, especially regarding the recruitment of vocations and the lack of financial resources. The end of the First World War (1914-1918) did not change the situation.

In 1920, the Province faced a new trial, which arose within the Institute itself and was quite unexpected. The Superiors decided to detach the District of Pontós and create the Province of León, Spain. This way of governing was 'normal' until the Second Vatican Council, which brought about the new attitude of co-responsibility and subsidiarity in the exercise of government. The decision in 1959 to divide Marist Spain into seven Provinces was still taken, apparently, without prior consultation with the local Superiors, causing a storm in the Province of León.

The *Annals of the Province of Aubenas* of June 22, 1920, read:

In a meeting with the community of Ruoms (then the Provincial House), Reverend Brother Bassianus, the Provincial, gave some details about the new Superiors and the main work of the General Chapter. The General Council has erected the District of Pontós as a Province. Brother Bertuald is the

Provincial of the new Province. For administrative reasons, León is chosen as the center of this Province, since the most of personnel are concentrated in the west of Spain. Private talks between Brothers Flamien and Euphrosin, as well as Brother Bertuald, resulted in the sale of our house of Pontós which will now belong to Mexico. This new solution is frustrating for the Province of Aubenas – which had focused all its savings and recruitment efforts there since 1903, in the hope of finding valuable support for our works in France, which are so miserably compromised – and leaves us without a novitiate and with no resources for the future.

A letter dated September 4, 1920, from the Provincial Council of Aubenas to Brother Bertuald, appointed Provincial of the new Province, illustrates the situation (see Annex 2). It reflects the turmoil that was generated in the Brothers by a decision that would have serious consequences for the future of the Province but which was presented to them as a *fait accompli*. In November 1920, the Provincial Council contacted the General Council asking for support to keep the schools of France operating. They made a new attempt in November 1921. The new Provincial, Brother Joseph-Ovide, described the situation of the Province in a detailed letter (see Annex 2). The description of the situation was a genuine SOS “the seriousness of which justifies the length”, as he wrote at the end of the letter.

Brother Diogène, Superior General, replied on December 21 with a few lines of “advice and consolation from a father who is unable to rescue one of his children in need”, as Brother

Joseph-Ovide described the reply in his acknowledgement of receipt on December 27. Reverend Brother Diogène visited the Provincial House in Ruoms in March 22, 1922. Brother Provincial, with some pathos, said to him:

You put me in charge of a Province that deserves a special acknowledgement because it is the Province of religious vocations. In our Institute alone, there are 1600 religious that come from the Ardèche Department. You have entrusted these glorious remains to me. I cry to you, my Reverend Brother, ‘Save us, for we perish!’

After the Second World War (1939-1945), the Marist France experienced a springtime in vocations. This was also true for Aubenas. But the upturn did not last long. In 1949, the new Province of the Southeast was born from the merger of the Provinces of the Midi, each losing its original name. The new Province included 173 Brothers, 87 from Aubenas, and 86 from Saint-Paul.

What remains of the Province of Aubenas today? The house and the property of Labégude, cradle of the Province, have been sold. Only the municipal cemetery containing the graves of the 135 Brothers who died there from 1844 to 1878 provides any commemoration of their presence. As for the large Provincial House of Aubenas, built between 1874 to 1878 according to Brother Philogone’s plans, it is today used for Catholic education conducted by the diocese of Viviers. It is called *Ensemble scolaire Saint François d’Assise* and is un-

doubtedly an excellent use for the house. Yet, this cannot let us forget the name of *Immaculate Conception Boarding College* it used to bear – the *PIC* (*Pensionnat de l'Immaculée Conception*) or the *IMMAC*, which so many students attended under Marist governance. Two retired Brothers still offer catechesis there. They are part of the Marist community presently living in the premises of the former Saint Louis Juniorate of Ferrières. It is our last community in

Ardèche, together with that of Cheylard, which is formed by three Brothers who are also retired.

Let us hope that these communities will remain in the Ardèche region for a long time.

N.B.: Brother Alain Delorme, studied at *Pensionnat de l'Immaculée Conception* in Aubenas from 1940 to 1945. This article was written at Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux on August 1, 2015.

ANNEX 1

**HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE PROVINCE OF AUBENAS
1844-1920 (EXCERPTS)**

When Reverend Brother Philogone, Assistant, was sent by Very Reverend Brother Louis-Marie to direct the Province of Aubenas in 1861, he found no Brothers available to staff the schools, a fact that he pointed out to the Reverend Brother! He was told that, if he needed Brothers, they would be sent to him from Saint-Paul, and he found himself in the need to make the request that same year. Reverend Brother Ladislas, then Provincial Director (of Saint-Paul), after asking Saint-Genis (where the Assistant of Saint-Paul was based) if someone should actually go up there, received only an evasive answer. We know how much he [Brother Philogone] insisted ever since [...].

Under Very Reverend Brother Théophile, on April 8, 1892, Reverend Brother Philogone, Assistant for the Province of Aubenas, suffering because his Province was still limited to two-thirds of the Ardèche Department, plus the arrondissement of Alais in the Gard Department, fiercely complained about this state of affairs to Reverend Brother Théophile, and sent him a letter – that is kept in the Archives – whose words are a bit surprising, because the just cause that he defended was so evident.

As a result of his legitimate lobbying, according to a decision made by the General Council, eight estab-

lishments – six in the Gard Department and two in the Hérault Department – were transferred, together with the Brothers, to the Province of Aubenas. This was a long way from the response he was looking for. In addition, the way in which they went about appointing the Brothers in these schools left a long-lasting memory. Those who had any value were hastily withdrawn and replaced with Brothers whose mediocrity was well-known, or who were at odds with their respective Superiors.

Therefore, as can be seen from the foregoing, four main causes explain the poor development of the Province of Aubenas from 1844 to 1903, that is, for half a century:

- 1° A number of good Brothers were sent to the Province of Saint-Paul and other Provinces.*
- 2° It was too limited in its territory.*
- 3° It had few important schools, and thus limited financial resources.*
- 4° The poor region, in which fundraising is unknown because it is impossible.*

Despite these weaknesses, in 1903 the Province of Aubenas had 93 houses in France and 17 in Algeria, with 575 Brothers, 50 postulants and 110 juniors.

Dispersal [after 1903-04] came as a terrible blow to the Province, since it had no houses abroad to which it could send Brothers⁴. As a result, 80 young men in formation, with whom we did not know what to do, went back to their families. Forty-two Brothers, most of them with good formation – 33 had the Brevet Élémentaire, and five the Brevet Supérieur – were sent to the District of Cape Town (South Africa), without any other compensation to the Province of Aubenas than the clothing and travel expenses. The same number went to Northern Brazil. This group founded the Province bearing that same name. Algeria, a thriving District with 17 houses and 120

Brothers, was immediately secularized. It was a great misfortune, especially because the District mostly comprised young Brothers from 20 to 30 years of age, who were left to themselves as an effect of the new situation, and lacked the moral strength to resist the currents of perdition.

The novitiate of Aubenas and the juniorate of Labégude were transferred to Pontós. However, always for the same reason – the lack of resources – this formation house could not develop as desired. Currently, in January 1920, the District has 20 houses, 160 Brothers in the schools, 40 novices, 40 postulants and 50 juniors”.

ANNEX 2

ARCHIVES OF THE PROVINCE OF AUBENAS - EXCERPTS

From the Provincial Council of Aubenas to Reverend Brother Bertuald, Provincial of León:

*Jesus, Mary and Joseph.
Ruoms, September 4, 1920*

Dear Brother Provincial,

*The news about the former District of Pontós becoming the Province of León was a real surprise for the Brothers of the Province of Aubenas. They were all very painfully affected by it [...]. The members of the Aubenas Provincial Council unanimously reject the division of our Province into two new autonomous parts as being contrary to our traditions and even more to the general and specific interests of the two new Provinces. It would hence be better, it seems to us, for the General Council to take steps to reconsider the decision, in order to keep our flourishing Province of yesteryear intact. It will be easy, by means of a personal meeting between a delegated representative from Aubenas and yourself, Reverend Brother Provincial, to reconcile our mutual interests, by speaking frankly and putting ourselves on the ground of the common good. There is no need to inform you about the state of our personnel in this area of France. It is more than lamentable. Urgent help is necessary if we do not want to die in the near future. But in view the wonderful schools we need to keep, it would be a crime to sign our death warrant. Could you not, without delay, re-establish our former union through an immediate intervention, even though it is a little late, since your appointments have already been made?
[...]*

The Members of the Council

From the Annals of the Province of Aubenas (1901-1941),

November 1921: new letter from the Provincial Council to the General Council asking for help to keep the works of France (Annals of the Province of Aubenas, 1901-1941).

The Provincial Council of Aubenas deems it necessary to inform the Reverend Brother Superior General and the members of his Council, by a special resolution, about the sad and disturbing state of the Province's school personnel, the recruitment of vocations and, perhaps in the near future, the maintenance and development of some missions in distant Provinces. Therefore, it respectfully wants to communicate what follows to the members of the General Council.

In 1903, the Province of Aubenas had more than 600 Brothers, all from Ardèche, with a few rare exceptions. After the dispersal, a first group of 54 Brothers – 40 of whom had the Brevet Élémentaire or the Brevet Supérieur – left for South Africa, a District stalled because of a lack of Brothers. This considerable backing rapidly gave a new impetus to its schools. And, if our information is correct, South Africa did nothing but praise the sound financial management of the Brothers from Aubenas.

A second group – still more numerous and whose intellectual and professional skills matched those of the first – sailed to Brazil. Around the same time of this general stampede, a number of young men – between 70 and 80 – were forced to go back to their families because we did not know where to send them, given that the Province of Aubenas has no foothold outside France. And finally, after this triple bloodletting the Province suffered, what remained of its quite mutilated novitiate took shelter in Pontós. Some of our scarce teachers and a dozen Brothers employed in manual work went with the novitiate.

More than 300 Brothers, however, remained in France and continued the work under secularized conditions. It was quite a number. Alas, it started falling each year, given that the young recruits who were sent and trained in Spain no longer came to fill the gaps left by death among the eldest. That was the situation in 1920, during this rapid downslide for the mother Province, with personnel reduced to 115 Brothers, mostly old men, when Pontós was permanently separated from Aubenas, each side keeping its own places. It was something unbelievable, since the mother – after devoting all her resources to maintain her daughter for 17 years, sending her, for the same period of time, all her recruits – found herself stripped of everything without ever being told why. She has no novitiate house, nor new members to take over from those who fall, nor least of all, the five or six hundred thousand francs so painfully gathered, which she gradually sent to Pontós so that they could construct the house and take care of the young students, independently of what the General Fund also provided.

Over a year later, the undersigned, representatives of the Province, have not been able to understand such a decision. And they hope their legitimate claims will not be turned down, and that justice will be eventually done.

In the meantime, they suffer the negative consequences this measure through the lack of personnel for a Department that has provided over 1400 subjects to different Provinces of our Institute. This entails, each year, closing down a number of schools. For example, three establishments had to be closed last September, two of which were in the main towns of the region, and the third in a very religious parish that has given six Brothers to the Congregation, and three others that were in prospect. We were forced to send these elsewhere because of the closure. The Diocesan authority was strongly moved by this situation. They begged us, using very convincing arguments, not to abandon these schools. Given our inability to keep them due to the lack of personnel, the Bishop has made a call to other Congregations. The Brothers of the Christian Schools just opened in Saint-Martial with four teachers. The Marianists, which the Bishop also called, are about to take over some places in the diocese for the recruitment of vocations. And this is how others are taking over what we can no longer keep within a stronghold that was once fully ours. This is deeply regrettable now and, even more so, for the future. Moreover, the Bishop of Viviers, who until now has been quite caring and kind towards us, shows nothing but than coldness. Most recently, after asking him for a chaplain for Ferrières, he gave us the following answer: "You ask me for a chaplain for your juniorate of Ferrières... I have no other reply that the same you have given me whenever I have asked you for teachers for my schools. It is, in my case, more sincere and more justified".

What we, and the bishop most of all, are unable to understand is the fact that we are closing down the schools, especially those that are a source of vocations, to send these same vocations abroad. Unfortunately – and it will keep happening – this year several Brothers who were born in Ardèche came from distant Provinces to spend some time with their families before or after the Second Novitiate; when their respective parish priests see them returning to their missions while schools close one after the other in the diocese, they look for every means to make them stay. But they never succeed, and since these Brothers belong to other Provinces, Aubenas naturally suffers the consequences.

"You are not only guilty of gross stupidity, but of the most glaring injustice!" – a parish priest full of more zeal than charity, recently yelled at us in anger. Our recruiter often hears kind comments like the following: "During the [priests'] retreat, the Bishop told us not to send vocations to the Congregations that refuse providing teachers for our schools. There is nothing for you here, go your own way".

This is the real situation in which we find ourselves. You see, Reverend Brother, it is more than painful; it is alarming. This is because we still have the sad prospect of abandoning, perhaps soon, other schools we can no longer manage. In any case, and this is where we particularly want to draw the General Council's attention, the Province of Aubenas will unfortunately not be the only one affected. How many Brothers from Ardèche are working in other Provinces? They will not last forever. And who will take over from them if the source that initially provided these vocations dries up or is handled by other people? It is easy to see the great damage that is on the way for our Institute. Would it be possible to find other sources of vocations elsewhere that can compensate for such losses?

God willing! However, those of our region have already proved their worth. And without exaggeration, we can say they have done it in a conclusive way. As for us who, on the spot, see these facts unfold, there is a serious danger – we do not hesitate to state it – for our local works in particular and for the Institute in general, and we think it is our duty to highlight its imminence to those who preside over the destiny of the Institute.

This is the only reason for the foregoing statements, whose seriousness justifies the length.

The Council members of Aubenas are pleased to take this opportunity to offer the homage of their deep respect and entire submission to the Reverend Brother and the entire General Council.

*Signed: Brother Joseph-Ovide, Provincial,
and Brothers Bassianus, Clarence, Garnier and Bernon.*

THE DEBTS OF BARTHELEMY CHAMPAGNAT



Br Lucien Brosse

Brother Lucien Brosse, of the Brothers' community in Marlies, has had the opportunity to examine a copy of a document concerning Barthélemy Champagnat, the eldest brother of Marcellin. This document, 14.5 x 9.6 cm written on both sides of the paper, was brought to his notice in October 2015 by Mme Michèle Cheynet (née Margot) who lives in Le Rosey opposite the chapel. The stamp on it is not ornamental: it is a notarized document of the kind that gave legal validation to debts of less than 500F. Such a document could not be obtained without paying a fee of 25 centimes. It is of type that would be guarded carefully by a

creditor because it could prove valuable in the case of a legal dispute between creditor and debtor. That explains why, preserved by the Margot family, it has come down to us. The document reveals a series financial acts between 1835 and 1841 concerning the debts of Barthélemy Champagnat. When this man died on January 20, 1838, he left to his heirs the responsibility for determining the least difficult way for settling matters.

The content of the document is reproduced here with the original spelling corrected and some punctuation added. It contains five pieces of writing.

1. A PIECE OF WRITING SIGNED BY JEAN BARTHÉLEMY CHAMPAGNAT

"I, the undersigned Barthélemy Jean Champagnat, of Le Rosey, commune of Marlies, declares having received from Jean Montmartin, of Le Rosey, commune of Marlies, the sum of two-hundred Francs on the ninth of October one-thousand eight hundred thirty-five and the sum of four hundred Francs on the first of May one thousand eight hundred thirty five¹. Interest in accordance with the legal rate.²"

Champagnat

¹ The first date indicated 1836 and a five was then placed over it.

² Probably 5%

2. A PIECE OF WRITING SIGNED VERY PROBABLY BY JEAN MONTMARTIN

"I, Jean Montmartin, from the place of Le Rosey, comune of Marthes, acknowledge having received due interest from M. Barthelemi Champagnat up to the year one thousand eight hundred thirty-seven. I, Jean Montmartin, from the place Le Rosey, commune of Marthes, acknowledge having received the sum of thirty Francs as interest from Jean Margo, of the same place, the year³, 1838, on the 4th of November".

3. A PIECE OF WRITING (POORLY DONE), PROBABLY BY JEAN MARGOT

*"I, Jean Montmartin, I acknowledge having received from Jean Margo the sum of thirty Francs as interest of the present document, on the sixth of October, one thousand eight hundred thirty-nine".
I, Jean Montmartin, I acknowledge having received from Jean Margot the sum of thirty Francs as interest required by this document, on the third (or sixth) of October one thousand eight hundred(forty?)".*

Jean Montmartin⁴

4. A NEW PIECE OF WRITING OF A RATHER POOR QUALITY

"I, the undersigned Jean Montmartin acknowledge having received from Jean Margot the amount of 185 Francs as interest for 1841".

³ Year

⁴ Signature of Jean Montmartin on the document

5. A NEW PIECE OF WRITING DONE BY A MAN ACCUSTOMED TO WRITING, PERHAPS A NOTARY

"I have received from Jean Montmartin the sum of twelve Francs as interest for 1841 from Jb Champagnat."

Let us summarize the content:

Date	Creditor	Debtor	Amount
9/10/1835 01/05/1835	Jean Montmartin	B. Champagnat	200F (loan) 400F (loan)
1837	Jean Montmartin	B. Champagnat	Interest 1836-37 paid
04/11/1838	Jean Montmartin	Jean Margot	30F interest paid
06/10/1839	Jean Montmartin	Jean Margot	30F interest paid
06/10/1840	Jean Montmartin	Jean Margot	30F interest paid
1841	Jean Montmartin	Jean Margot	185 F for interest of 1841
1841	Unknown	J. Montmartin/ J.B. Champagnat	12F interest for 1841

We can infer from this document that in 1835 Jean-Barthélemy Champagnat borrowed the very large sum of 600F, the equivalent of two years' wages for an unskilled worker. As a result, he had to pay 30F interest every year (5% of the amount borrowed). After his death in 1838, Jean Margot took over Jean-Barthélemy's obligations and paid that amount. In 1841, he not only paid the interest, but also reimbursed a part of what had been borrowed, and therefore, there

was a reduction of the interest to 12F which presupposes a residual debt of 240F.

In the *Annals of the Institute* (V.1, §33 p.8), Brother Avit refers to this mess. Brother Gabriel Michel in his article *Grandeur et décadence des Champagnat*⁵ [The Rise and Fall of the Champagnats] later shed more light on arrangements for the estate of Barthélemy, whose daughter Anne-Marie, married Jean Margot, native

⁵ Published in the *Marist Notebooks*, No. 25, April 2002, p. 89-107

from St Victor-Malescours, on May 31, 1837. The marriage contract for Anne-Marie promised an endowment of one quarter of the Le Rozey property, the actual value of which is not known. Her mother pledged of one quarter of her rights, that is 4000F. But her father's debts were at 7540F.

In a letter of condolence of March 16, 1838, to Marie Clermondon, his sister-in-law⁶ Marcellin Champagnat, who was in Paris at that time, recognizes "he did not leave you great possessions". And he adds: "Tell Margot that I will be happy to meet him, to know him that I am very happy that he will be your walking-stick in old age; and tell my two nephews that I will receive them at l'Hermitage when they want to come".

The family attempted to save what could be saved and to provide for the survivors: the mother at her daughter's home and the children with their uncle. And we understand why Jean Margot was the one who paid the interest on the debts. Brother Avit (*Annals* §33 p.8) says clearly that Jean-Barthélemy "was obliged to sell the paternal house to M. Courbon⁷". This sale certainly did not take place during the life of Barthélemy; but, when we see the family's difficulty in paying off just a single debt, the situation could not be improved without sacrificing part of the estate. Albeit partially, this document lifts one corner of the veil on an economic predicament of the eldest brother of Marcellin of whom we know only in broad brush.

⁶ Letters of Champagnat, 1, p. 364, doc. 180

⁷ But he confuses the debts of the father and those of the children: Barthélemy and Jean-Pierre

THE GODFATHER OF MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT



Br Lucien Brosse



Br André Lanfrey

In the Annals of the Institute (T. 1 § 28 p. 3), Br. Avit copied the record of the Baptism of Marcellin Champagnat:

“The year 1789 and the 20th of May, Marcellin-Joseph-Benoît Champagnat was born and baptized the following day, legitimate son of Jean-Baptiste Champagnat, a farmer in Le Rozey, Parish of Marlihes and to Marie-Thérèse Chirat. His godfather, Marcellin Chirat, his uncle; and his godmother honnête¹ Marguerite Chatelard, his cousin by marriage .»

Signatures:

« Chirat, Chatelard, Alliroit Prior Parish Priest.”

This document shows us that the child received the first name of his godfather who knew how to sign his name.

Brother Lucien Brosse, of the Brothers community in Marlihes, has located the funeral monument of the Chirat-Courbon family which includes the name of Marcellin Chirat. It is a tomb-chapel in the cemetery of the town of St Régis-du-Coin², which was previously part of the Parish of Marlihes. This certainly is not the first

burial place or grave of Marcellin Chirat; it is more a memorial than a funeral monument, as I am going to try to show further on.

Below is the copy, from Br. Lucien Brosse, of the inscriptions engraved on a plaque inside this monument at the top of which we find a cross with the invocation “Jesus Mary, Joseph”, then the classical funeral inscription: *Pie Jesu dona eis requiem sempiternam*. Immediately following are these names of persons but it is not certain that their bodies or remains lie in this place³:

Marcellin Chirat 1747-1799. Spouse of⁴:

Catherine Frappa (1750-1810).

Marcellin Courbon (1763-1830).

Spouse of:

Marie Chirat (1782-1845)

Augustin Sauvignet (1801-1870). Spouse of:

Marguerite Courbon (1807-1875)

Uncle, godfather, cousins of Venerable

Marcellin Champagnat son of Jn. Bte

and Marie-Thérèse Chirat (1789-1840).

“SOUVENIR HONEUR RECONNAISSANCE”

¹ Title given to honorable people, but not to nobles

² In the corner, on the left when entering

³ The cemetery was created later after the creation of the administrative district during the 19th century

⁴ See the photo for the exact position of the inscriptions

What cross-referencing can this monument give us? In the first place, we can see that it was erected after 1896 since that is the year when Marcelin Champagnat received the title of Venerable⁵. And since the inscriptions do not mention other deceased than the three close relatives of the Ven. Marcellin Champagnat, it is more a homage of the Chirat-Courbon family to one of its prestigious members, and to those who knew him, than the catalogue of the deceased.

This monument is also a means for privately venerating a saint who is yet to be canonized. If acts of public devotion had been given to him, his Cause of Beatification may have risked being hindered⁶. A family and funeral monument, however, would permit a discreet veneration.

Concerning Marcellin Chirat, brother of Marie-Thérèse, we know that, like her, he is native of the small village or hamlet of Malcognière (Annals t. 1, § 12 p. 13), further to the east of Marhles than Le Rozey. When he became the godfather of Marcellin Champagnat, he was already an older man (42 years old) and died ten years later. Marcelin had time to get to know him during his childhood. His wife, Catherine Frappa, who would die in 1860, at 60 years of age, knew Marcellin as a young man.

The study of this tomb-chapel therefore permits us to broaden our fragmentary knowledge of the extended family of Marcellin Champagnat, and also to find, outside the Institute, a monument that expresses of the enduring memory of a saint not as a founder but as a revered family member.

⁵ The inscription evoking Champagnat could have been engraved quite some time after the names, but the whole seems to have a great unity which seems that this hypothesis has no place here.

⁶ In the procedure there is a questionnaire about « non cultu ».

THE DIGITALIZATION OF OUR ARCHIVES



Br Paul Sester

The concern about our archives dates back to the beginnings of our Institute when one day, when speaking to Brother Jean-Baptiste, Father Champagnat noted:

“My very dear Brother, you have an excellent memory. I urge you to keep a record of everything that is happening and of everything that we say. I entrust to you the responsibility of taking note of everything that might edify the Brothers or that might lead them to imitate such actions.” (“Biographies de quelques Frères.” Préface XIX)

The Founder reinforced his insistence when he wrote the following to the directors of our Institutions:

“We wish to establish an historical connection with the foundation of your institution and the Brothers involved... We would be pleased to receive the specifics of your beginnings so that they can be preserved in our main archives...” (O.F.M., vol 2, Nr.275)

Nevertheless, the subsequent response to this request is not immediately apparent. It is possible that Brother Jean-Baptiste responded to the demand but limited himself to what had been stated in the conferences and instructions delivered to the Brothers. Whatever the case may be, other than the letters

written by the Founder and the contributions of Brother Avit on the development of early institutions, precious little has been preserved of the early years. In fact, there is no mention in our early documents describing what our first Brothers were taught about the Founder during their formative years.

Renewed interest in the historical documentation in our archives came about in 1955 with the publication of “*Antiquiores textus Constitutionum Societatis Mariae*” by Father Jean Coste, SM, and various articles appearing in the Bulletin of the Institute by Brother Louis-Laurent, FMS under the title: “*Contribution à une reprise des travaux sur les origines des Petits Frères de Marie*”.

When I was chosen to go on a nine month spiritual renewal in 1966, I discovered the existence of various manuscripts going back to Father Champagnat. I took advantage of the free time during the program by studying the letters and other documentation related to the beginnings of our Institute. I immediately began making copies of the letters in order to make them known to the Brothers of my Province.

When I became Provincial at the end of my time of renewal, I took advantage of my position by publishing this material. My Provincial Secretary, Brother Léonce Plaisance offered to digitalize the material in the form of a book, and Brother Crétaillaz, who was responsible for printing the publication "Voyages et Missions", did not hesitate to publish it.

At that time, Brother Joseph Ganetelet graciously accepted being responsible for the house annals of the various establishments throughout the Province of Saint-Genis-Laval, copies of which I had made while I was in Rome. With the help of a data recorder acquired by the Province he patiently chronicled the transcripts of the various school foundations throughout the Province.

Having been called to Rome in 1971 to serve on the General Council, I became all the more interested in focusing my attention on our archives which, after six years, led to my appointment as Secretary General. According to the Rules, the care of the archives was one of the responsibilities of that position.

For her part, the religious Sister and blood relative of the Abbot of the basilica of Saint Paul's Outside the Walls was hired for a year by the secretariat to begin the process of computerizing the entries of "Les Annales du Frère Avit" that corresponded with the letters of Father Champagnat. At the time, with the help of Brother Joseph Belagny who

was also involved in the process, I organized all of the available documentation determining which were directly related to the Founder, which were related to Brother Jean-Baptiste, to Frère Avit, and to others, so that they could be carefully put in order and later computerized.

Given the special demands that this undertaking placed on the Secretary General, an assistant was called upon to help him in the person of Brother Robert Tremblay who devoted himself specifically to the communications undertaken by the General Councils. Whenever possible, he would computerize the material from the Founder that I would give him.

Furthermore, it was then that I learned that retired Brother Jean Escallier, from Bourg-de Péage, was willing to make use of his aptitude for typing, a skill that he had perfected over the years. He readily accepted to transcribe "Les Annales de Frère Avit" that still existed in the Provinces of Saint-Genis and N.D. de l'Hermitage as well as all those in all of the other Provinces: Varennes, Aubenas, Lacabane, and Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux. Living in the same community and already interested in the history of the Institute, Brother Jean-Marie Girard took an interest in reading these documents soon became the official proofreader of what had been recorded. Similarly, I recruited Brothers who were able and willing to transcribe the original texts, such as Brother Jean-Pierre Cotnoir who was

on a six month renewal program. He was masterful at the keyboard, so I asked him to type “L’abrégé des Annales du Frère Avit” as I dictated the various texts to him.

At the conclusion of a presentation on the areas of responsibility of Secretary General I had made to the Brothers making their Second Novitiate, I once offered them to consider making use of some of their time in retirement by copying some of the documentation in our files. One of the Brothers in the renewal program who was close to retirement age, namely Brother Louis Richard from Marseilles, willingly accepted the offer. Since then, making use of the necessary equipment to computerize, scan, and correct documentation, he continues the work of data-processing our archives in order to make their content known to the Brothers throughout the entire Institute. Thanks to him, the following documents are now available to us: “Les Lettres du Père Champagnat” which were put into contemporary French, the Circulars of Brother François, his 23 Notebooks, all three large volumes of “Origines Maristes” by J. Coste and G. Lessard, the 17 volume collection of the General Administration’s communications to the Brothers beginning with Brother François to Brother Léonida, as well as other less extensive documentation.

In another setting, while in Lagny, I met Brother Jean Rousson, a retired teacher who was doing remarkable work in the area statistical analysis in

his educational institution. He willingly agreed to apply his specialization to such documents as: “*Avis, Leçons, Sentences*”, “*Vie de M. Duplay*”, and the communications of the Brothers in China. He agreed to bring statistical order many other documents, even as he lived in the house of retirement at Saint-Paul-Tois-Châteaux.

Having served as Secretary General over many years, and having put the archives into good order, I was now able to turn my attention to having “Les Lettres du Père Champagnat” finally published. However for the task to be historically valid, each letter had to be accompanied by a commentary for the context and intent of each letter to be truly understood. In order to accomplish this objective, it was necessary to do some research on the local setting of each of the letters as well some understanding of the recipients themselves. With this end in mind, research had to be made on the people and locations involved. The task was confided to Brother Raymond Borne who, as a member of the archive work group, volunteered to conduct these investigations over a period of three years during school holidays. He visited towns and villages where our schools were located and interviewed local mayors and government officials seeking information that might throw light onto the matter.

This allowed us to publish “Les Lettres” in two volumes: first of all, the texts themselves in 1985, followed by the commentaries in 1987. However,

the task went well beyond that. What was needed was the ability to grasp the unique impression left by each and every letter written by the Founder. An answer to this was provided with the appearance of a three volume compendium in 2011, with Brothers André Lanfrey, Henri Réocreux, Jean Rousson and others, making their own insightful contributions. As a result, a small and untiring group of contributors was gathered around Brother Paul Sester. They make it possible for all of us throughout the Institute to have access to a wealth of information reaching out, not only to our beginnings, but to our contemporary world as well.

Throughout the Institute, other groups of researchers have made major contributions as well, in particular, the CEPAM of Brother Aureliano Brambila, and in Brazil, the publication of the "*Cartas recebidas*" by Brother Ivo Strobino. Workshop presentations and the translations of our original documents have not gone unnoticed, both in English speaking countries and elsewhere. However, keeping up with all of these latest developments is no easy task.

Finally, while the question of the availability of resources has been largely resolved throughout the Institute, it seems to me that there are three issues that remain:

1. Most of our resources have been placed on fragile support systems (DVD, cahiers A4...) and are therefore threatened with soon becoming obsolete. Until a work has been printed, it is threatened with extinction.
2. Often the work of transcribing documents has not been corroborated and rarely does the end product enjoy the benefits of having had a critical review and an official recognition both of which contribute a great deal to its credibility.
3. The available resources are not sufficiently utilized and there are too few qualified researchers. Furthermore, accessibility of many of our original documents has become problematic ever since the French language has lost its status as the prime international language. In addition, not everything can be readily translated and translations are often nuanced and opened to interpretations.

THE WHEELS OF GOD'S LOVING HEART



Br André Lanfrey

Such is the curious title of Brother Michel Rampelberg's account of the 45 convoys that made their way through such places as Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldavia and Bosnia. Although he currently lives in retirement in Beaucamp, he is the kingpin of the organization that carried out these undertakings between the years 1985-2006.



Br Michel Rampelberg

While teaching in Beaucamp, located near the city of Lille, Brother Michel founded a Recreation Society in 1977 with the intention of providing recreational and educational opportunities for young people on vacation. In 1985, humanitarian aid came to play a significant role in the initial project which came to be known under the French acronym "ADAJ", meaning: "The Society of Young People Rendering Assistance to Countries in Distress".

Brother Michel regards the time of providing humanitarian aid as taking place during two periods. The first, he calls the "days of the passenger bus".

The actual bus was purchased in 1983 and was used to take young people to their vacation destinations. Beginning in 1985, it was used to bring some 30 young Polish students on pilgrimages to Czestochowa. At the time, this was also one of the principal means of protesting against the Communist Party. Part of the bus was also used to carry humanitarian aid. From 1985 to 1989, the Society sponsored 10 pilgrimages, 5 of which occurred under Communist Rule. There were times when the bus became available to young students adults and from Wroclaw in Poland, or Lviv in Ukraine to come and visit Western Countries.

Gradually, humanitarian aid became more organized and diversified. From 1985 to 1999, 176 convoys were sent out, 173 by passenger bus and three by transport vehicles. Of those sent out, 79 went to Poland, 8 to Belarus, 4 to Bosnia and 85 to Ukraine. Because of limitations being placed by custom officials, beginning in 1999, only 10 ton vehicles could be used thereby severely limiting the number of crossings which by 2006 was reduced to 239.

After 1995, the convoys destined toward Poland became more infre-

quent while Ukraine now became the principal destination of the convoys because of the pressing economic needs of that country. In 2006, the Society totaled 500 members. Material goods and monetary donations came from northern France, from Normandy, Belgium etc. Volunteers collected clothing, footwear, toys, dinnerware, cleaning products, medicine, medical equipment, school needs... checking them, sorting them out, packing them, and loading them. And so it was that 30 to 35 convoys headed for the Ukraine and Moldavia at the rate of two or three a month. For an average distance of 4,235 kilometers, the average cost of a delivery was approximately 2,500 Euros. After a preliminary assessment of the needs had been made, the main beneficiaries included hospitals, schools, orphanages, convalescent homes, Caritas, the Red Cross, and associations for the disadvantaged.

Beginning with newsletter publications by the Society, the account of Brother Michel's many journeys in Eastern Europe between the years 1993 to 2006 is chronicled in a 460 page book printed in Moukatchevo, Ukraine, in 2007 and edited by Karpataska Veja. Brother Michel continued teaching until 1998 and divided his time between his professional obligations and humanitarian action. An enormous amount of patience and resolve was demanded of him and the other drivers as they drove over rough roads, faced inter-

minable waiting periods at the borders, harassment and corruption by local authorities, and the ever present possibility of automotive breakdowns.

As is seen through the detailed account of the persons whom he met, his journeys through towns and villages, schools and care facilities, Brother Michel demonstrated a high degree of personal commitment. The entire situation witnesses to an emerging Europe about to free itself from the shackles of communism.

Brother Michel had the perception of including a personal reflection which he wrote in 2000. It indicates how deeply rooted his activity was in the Gospel:

"The account of the return of the apostles after they had been sent out came to mind:
 – their excitement about their mission,
 – their weariness,
 – their desire for some quiet time
 But Jesus said to them:
 I cannot abandon them.
 I must go on.
 I must reach out and touch them.
 Those who came to Him,
 listened to him."

At the present time, the Society continues its mission and Brother Michel takes part in it as much as his strength allows.

N.B.: Brother Michel Rampelberg died on 23rd February 2017 at Beau-camps-Ligny.

HERMITAGE MARISTA

Formation program for lay people



**Br Ivo Antônio
Strobino**

A very successful formation experience for Marist lay people and co-workers in relation to our spiritual heritage has been the program called Hermitage Marista, run by the Province of Brazil Centro-Sul (PM-BCS). It is an academic course, with classes (not on-line), a university extension program, accredited by the Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná (PUCPR). It is under the direction of the co-ordination group of the Province Commission for Consecrated Life and the Laity.

Each year 35 students on average are accepted, lay Marists and our co-workers in the fields of youth ministry, education and Province administration, as well as members of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family. The program is run in three modules over the course of the year, each module lasting four complete working days. In the periods between one module and the next the students are provided with readings on relevant topics. Those wanting to gain a certification have to complete a certain number of hours and produce a written text (TCC) under the supervision of a lecturer.

There is a constant demand for places on the program. At various times we have had to select those to enrol, leaving others on a waiting list, or enrolling them for the following year. In the classes themselves, many displayed an obvious interest and enthusiasm for the figure and story of Champagnat. The eyes of some were sparkling, maybe because this was the first time they had seriously studied the topic; a sign of communion and feeling in tune with the Marist spirit. It is as if they had discovered something precious in their own home that they had not noticed beforehand. The students of HERMITAGE MARISTA are the lay people who are the most enthusiastic about taking part in pilgrimages to the places of our Marist origin in France when these are organised by the Province.

The program HERMITAGE MARISTA began in 2007 when, feeling the desire to spread the richness of our spiritual patrimony, I put together something in a much simpler format and that is how it was for the first year. Then the Commission of Consecrated Life and Laity took responsibility for the program, developed it into some-

thing more comprehensive and academic, linked to our University (PUCPR), and so well-structured. It has now been functioning for 10 years!

The basic elements of the course are the following: Marcellin Champagnat – life; Marcellin Champagnat – Letters; Society of Mary; the First Brothers; political and social context of the time; religious and educational context of the time; structure, legislation and development of the Institute; Marist pedagogy; Spirituality and Charism.

Current or former lecturers in the HERMITAGE MARISTA program include: Br Afonso Murad, Br. Rafael Ferreira Junior, Br. Afonso Levis, Br. Pedro J. Wolter, myself, Br. Ivo, and Br Antonio Martínez Estaún, presently in the General House in Rome. As well, from the start, Heloisa Afonso de Allmeida Sousa, currently in the community at the Hermitage, assisted us in preparing and implementing the course, including as lecturer, as did Professor Adalgisa de Oliveira, currently director of the Course on Marist

Charism and Educational Principles. On two occasions, Br André Lanfrey, while passing through Brazil, presented special lectures for the students.

The HERMITAGE MARISTA program has been taken up, under the name of PEM, by the Province of Brazil Sul-Amazonas where it has run for the past five years. Likewise in the city of Brasilia, the federal capital of the country, where the three Marist Provinces of Brazil have a joint presence with large schools and a significant number of lay co-workers, the program is being presented locally with a reduced format, entitled Mini-Hermitage Marista.

This work of spreading our spirituality, our history and charism, a work taken up by other Provinces and regions of the Institute as well, is a powerful initiative of the Spirit in our days. We have something precious in our home to be offered to the lay people who share our mission and who want to be seated around the same table, under the spacious tent of the Marist family of Champagnat.

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